

N I N E T E E N
S E R M O N S
O N
S E V E R A L O C C A S I O N S .

By *JOHN ROGERS, D. D.* 15
Late Vicar of ST. GILES, CRIPPLEGATE, Sub-
Dean and Canon of WELLS, and Chaplain in
Ordinary to his Majesty.

To which is prefixed,
The A U T H O R ' s L I F E ,
W I T H A N
E L O G I U M

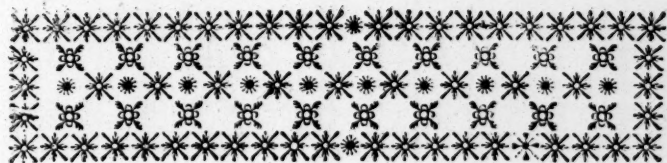
W R I T T E N B Y
J O H N B U R T O N , B . D .
Fellow of ETON COLLEGE.

A N E W E D I T I O N .

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ELOGIUM

Sacrum MEMORIÆ

Johannis Rogers, S. T. P.

CHRISTIANE LECTOR
Quicumque vel Ecclesiæ vel Reipublicæ

Civis vixeris idoneus,
Gratulationis simul & Doloris
Accede nostri Particeps,
Beatam recolens Memoriam

J O H A N N I S R O G E R S :

Viri,

Inter S. T. Professores
Merito suo celeberrimi ;
Qui recenset Titulos,
Idem simul laudat Virtutes.

In Scriptis, juxta ac Moribus,
Eminebat Gratia
Pietatis vere Sacerdotalis.

Aderat Animi.

A 2

Magni-

ELOGIUM.

Magnitudo, & Moderatio,
 Cuilibet Muneri, Fortunæque,
 Sive sustinendæ five ornandæ,
 Par.

Ingenium porro singulare,
 Cujus Acumen
 Invita laudavit Obtrectatio,
 Cujus vim auspicatam
 Testabitur usque
 Defensa Veritas,
 Refutatus Error.

Scriptor

Indolis Stylique juxta felix,
 Controversias gravissimas
 Suscepit, administravit, exhaustit ;
 Christianæ Religionis
 Et Libertatis Vindex,
 Licentiæ Refrænator ;
 Idem optimus
 Et Sacerdos & Civis.
 Quod erat Fortitudinis Christianæ
 Deo soli placere studens ;
 Quod erat eximiæ Moderationis,
 In Dogmatis statuendis,
 Sectæ nullius
 Vel Princeps, vel Affecla ;
 In Controversiarum Actionibus
 Non Ligitator, sed Arbiter ;
 Quod demum miræ erat Felicitatis,
 Sine offensione Partium,
 Sine Invidia Victor :
 Contentionis potius oblivionem quærens,
 Quam

ELOGIUM.

V

Quam Triumphi gloriam ;
Tranquillitatis publicæ studiosior
Quam Famæ suæ.
Nihil arripere temere præjudicatum,
Sed ex Meditationis severæ officina
Omnia bene pensitata & explorata
Proferre, tueri ;
Veritatem unice
Oculo irretorto investigare :
Antiquæ Stabilitatis Præfidia
Non Errorum vel Perfidie
Involucra quærere :
Non Hominum merita,
Sed momenta rerum perpendere :
Offensionum materiem
Non subministrare, sed præcidere ;—
Disputanti,
Hæ illi erant Artes.
Quam in CHILLINGWORTHIO jure mireris,
Copiam & Subtilitatem,
Quam in eodem forte desideres,
Gravitatem & Constantiam.
Quæ demum in HOOKERO suo
Erant summa omnia,
Ad causæ confimilis defensionem
Conjuncta feliciter adhibuisse,—
Hæ Illi erant Laudes.
Politia nostra Anglicana,
Tum Ecclesiastica, tum Civilis,
Incolumis usque tuebitur
Honoratam Vindicis sui Memoriam :
Et, quæ rebus novis studentium
Commenta delet,

Sera dies confirmabit Judicia
 JOHANNIS ROGERS.

Concionanti

Aderat nervosa, simplex, flexanima,
 Et spectabilis quædam
 Facundia;

Stylumque neglecta sequebatur Elegantia :
 Ita ut nihil ad Docendum aptius
 Audiverit Plebs Rustica,
 Nihil popularius LONDINENSES,
 Nihil demum gravius subtiliusve
 Academici.

Ubique mirabundus agnoscas
 Ingenii multiformis hominem
 Inter Oratores Dialecticum,
 Inter Dialecticos Oratorem,
 Omnimodo dicendi laude cumulatum,

Non Aures leviter delinire,
 Sed Corda ferire, perdomare ;
 Super rebus arduis consulentium
 Animis scrupulos eximere ;
 Pontificorum fraudes & infidias
 Simplicitate ipsa eludere, superare ;
 Schismaticorum pervicaciam
 Benevolentia frangere, expugnare ;
 Quoquomodo Dissidentes conciliare;
 Errantes dirigere ;
 Vacillantes confirmare ;
 Omnes demum Consilio flectere,
 Auctoritate moderari ;
 Ea erat Illi
 Curarum privatarum summa,

Id

ELOGIUM.

vii

Id erat Illi
Eloquentiæ Sacerdotalis Palmarium.
In hac præsertim parte triumphabat
Orator vere Christianus,
Divini Juris Consultus,
Interpres fidissimus.

In *Consuetudinis Domesticae* officiis
Quam amabilis fuerit
Maritus, Parens, Frater, Amicus,
Etiamnum testantur suorum
Lacrymæ & Suspiria.
En, laudis instar amplissimæ
Commune Desiderium !

Rei familiaris
Dispensator prudens,
Ab Ostentatione Luxuque abhorrens,
Ex honesta Parsimonia
Liberalitatis melius collocandæ
Subsidia quæfivit.
Magni erat instar Beneficii
Illum habuisse Antecessorem,
Quem nulla fere Domus Ecclesiastica
Aliquamdiu exceperat Incolam,
Quæ non postmodo agnoverit
Benefactorem.

Publico.
Splendore, Dignitate, Commodo
Gaudebat, ut suo :
Ptochotrophis,
Eruditionis Christianæ Scholis,
Clerici nominis

Viduarum, Orphanorum Hæteriis
Aderat

Fautor, Vindex, Patronus,
Confiliis, Eloquentia, Liberalitate,

Otio florebat

Nec inertī nec infructuoso,
Artium etiam Mechanicarum Cultor;
In ipsis studiorum oblectamentis
Ea affecutus,
Quæ Industriæ alienæ
Laudem adæquaverint.

In Negotiis obeundis

Ea erat,
Quam in homine Politico laudaveris,
Solertia :
Ea interim,
Quam in Ecclesiastico postulaveris,
Innocentia.

In Colloquiis

Inerat vivida quædem, &
Quæ Sodalem maxime commendat,
Hilaritas faceta.

In Congressibus porro *quibuscunque*
Ea, quæ hominem Liberalem decebat,

Comitas :
Quæ Academicum,
Simplicitas :
Quæ denique Clericum,
Severitas Reverenda.

Illu-

ELOGIUM.

ix

Illustrabat hæc omnia
Animi ingenita Celsitudo,
Laudabilis Superbia
Generosa quædam Dignatio,
Posthabitæ secura Famæ :
Qualem profecto
Neque jure quisquam reprehendere
Neque forsan sine reprehensione
Imitari potuerit.

In Curriculo Gloriæ multiplici
Non frustra exercebatur
Hominis tanta Virtus,
Inter Aulicos sine Ambitione,
Inter Superiores sine Invidia,
Inter omnes sine Fastu spectata,
Adulari prorsus indocilis,
Laudum pareter & Obtrectationum
Contemptrix,
Injuriarum sedulo inscia,
Sponte immemor,
Ignoscendo certe plusquam Victrix.
In hominum frequentia Negotiisque
Jamdiu multa cum laude versatus
Vir pius & sapiens
Voluit aliquando Otio frui,
Sibi aliquantisper vacare,
Publicis interim utilitatibus
Non deesse.

Verum (quod Ecclesia bene verteret)
Ex amabili secessu
In urbis celebritatem

Pene

ELOGIUM.

Pene invitum revocavit
 Benevolentia singularis Patronorum,
 Quibus ita placuisse
 Meritorum erat
 Commendatio plane invidenda,
 Elogio omni longe honorificentior.

Ibi, cum quod reliquum erat temporis,
 Deo consecratum impenderet,
 Animæ magnæ plus æquo prodigus,
 Et, quod fuisset prudentiæ opus mirificæ,
 CRIPPLEGATENSIIUM etiam suorum
 Animos aliquando conciliaturus,
 In ipso honorum aditu,
 Famæque crescentis flore,
 Temporibus Ecclesiæ certe alienissimis,
 Consilia sua honestissima,
 Et ingentes bonorum omnium spes,
 Febre præreptus luctuosa
 Fefellit.

Fortissimi Vir Animi
 In ancipiti illa trepidatione,
 In supremo illo discrimine,
 Sibi constans,
 Quod super erat Spiritus
 In pias pro Ecclesia preces
 Moriens efflavit.

Mecum ergo, Lector Christiane,
 Hæc damna luge publica;
 Tam pretiosi Capitis desiderio tangi
 Pietatis laus est non infima:
 At æmulari potuisse

Illæ

ELOGIUM.

xi

Illa fuerit Ingenii,
Illa Morum
Laus pulcherrima.

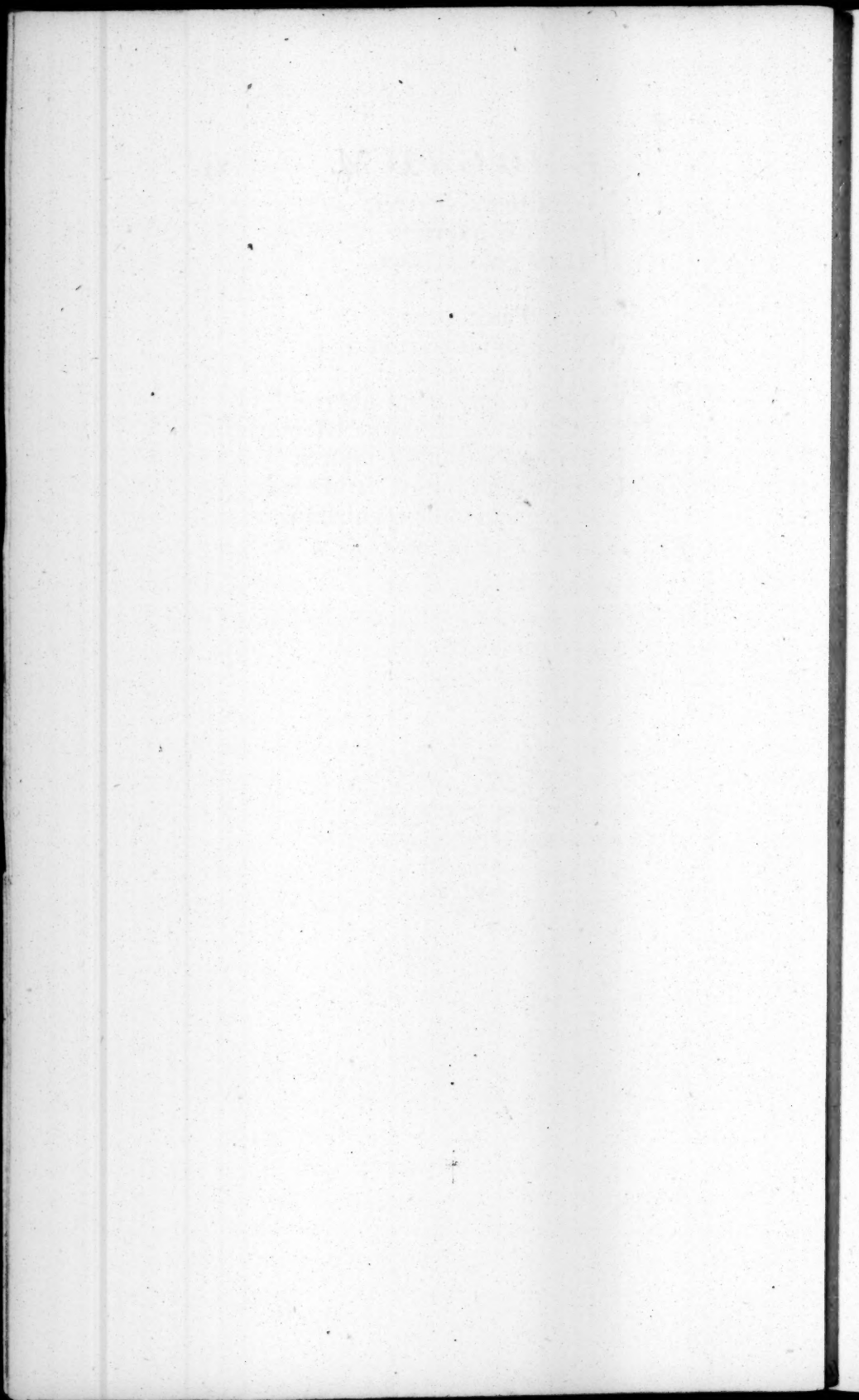
Faxit Deus

Ut Virtutum tantarum unde
Ad Ecclesiam, ad Rempublicam
Fructus redundarunt uberrimi,
Honestissima vigeat usque Memoria,
Posterisque profit Exemplum ;
Ut aliquando minus desideretur
Ille, quem nunc requirimus,

JOHANNES ROGERS.



AN





A N
A C C O U N T
O F T H E
L I F E
O F T H E
A U T H O R.

HERE is a natural Curiosity
T which leads every attentive
Reader into Enquiries concern-
ing the moral Character of
those Authors, whose Writings he admires.
A nearer

A nearer Acquaintance with their Virtues confirms his Judgment in their Favour : And the Esteem conceived for the Person, brings an additional Value to the Performance.

'Tis observable that some eminent Men, who have distinguished themselves in some important Points, as no Friends to the Church of *England* by Law established, have been honoured with magnificent Encomiums : Such Marks of Respect bestowed on their Memory, seem to have given an Air of Credit and Triumph to their Singularities ; and the less discerning Part of Mankind, from having Mens Persons in Admiration, are apt to be led unawares into the Approbation of their Principles. If then the just Praise of personal Accomplishments in any Author, does indirectly carry along with it a Recommendation of the Cause in which he was engaged ; it were to be wished, on Account of the common Good, that some more able Pen was employed in doing this Act of Justice to the Memory of Dr. *John Rogers*, a most true Son of our Holy Church, which he defended by his Writings,

tings, and adorned by his Life. His Works do indeed abundantly speak his Praise ; but still some honourable Testimony is due to his distinguished Merit : Something is due to the Satisfaction of the Publick, and the Expectation of his Friends. The Character of a good Parish-Priest is of general Use ; that of such a Masterly Pen in Controversy, exercised with such Christian Moderation, is singular and uncommon ; that of so ingenious and orthodox a Divine, and so excellent a Defender of our religious Establishment in these present Times, appears more especially seasonable and instructive.

It has therefore been thought proper to introduce this Volume of Sermons into the World, with some Account of the worthy Author. Accordingly for the Entertainment of the *Learned* Reader here is prefixed a copious Elogium in *Latin*, written some time since and lately communicated by his Friend the Rev. Mr. *Burton* of C. C. C. in *Oxford*. And moreover, for the Satisfaction of the common *English* Reader, the following Narrative is offered to the Publick, which, imperfect as it is, will,

will, I hope, not be wholly unacceptable, while it gives some Idea of this excellent Man in his private and publick Character, passing through various Stations of Life with more than ordinary Credit and Reputation.

HE was born at *Ensham* in *Oxfordshire*, *A. D.* 1679. his Father was Vicar of that Parish, and Rector of *Wick-Riffington* in *Gloucestershire*, a very worthy Clergyman: a Circumstance which he always esteemed part of his Honour and Happiness. He was bred up at *New College* School in *Oxford*, under the memorable Mr. *Badger*. In *Jan.* 1693, he was elected Scholar of *C. C. C.* a Society to be mentioned with Honour on many Accounts, but especially for that exemplary Strictness observed in the Examination of Candidates, and Integrity in their Elections. He was the youngest of all the Competitors, who appeared more numerous on this Occasion than had been remembered; so that his Success implies no small Praise of his Merit. How he improved the Advantages of his Situation in a College remarkable for good Discipline, I leave the Reader to judge

judge by the Effects. In this early Time of Life, when young Mens Passions often fall out into some Kind of Extravagance or other, he shewed in one Instance an uncommon Turn of Mind, at once intent on Pursuits in themselves widely different, Country Diversions and Academical Studies. I remark this as somewhat peculiar to him, and not safely to be imitated by others. I should not have commended him for a keen Sportsman, if that Circumstance had proved inconsistent with the Character of a good Scholar. It was his singular Happiness, amidst all his Excursions, still to keep the main Point in View ; in his Recreations he preserved his Innocency, and returned to his Studies with as much Chearfulness as he had left them. Application in the Night Time repaired the Defects of the broken Day ; and without the Appearance of much Industry, he made a considerable Proficiency in Learning. With Reputation he proceeded to the Degree of *A. M.* and his Character justified the ambitious Hopes of his Friends, which soon after a violent Fever had like to have cut short. The general Solitude of the whole

xviii *An Account of the*

College for him on this Occasion was one Proof of the Esteem they had of his Worth.

HE had a remarkable Briskness of Spirit, such as could contemn and overcome Difficulties; and withal, an Openness and Sincerity of Temper, which gained the Love and Esteem of his Contemporaries: A quick Apprehension, a large Capacity, and an unwearied Attention to any Point in View: An happy Frame of Mind which would have rendered him eminent in *any* Profession. But his Inclination, as well as the ordinary Course of his Education, determined him to the Study of Divinity. Accordingly he went into Holy Orders, with a just Sense of the Dignity of his Office, which he magnified by a suitable Behaviour. And We of this Church have Reason to join with him in giving Thanks to God, "*that he was called to the Honour of the Priesthood in the Church of England, which he revered, as most agreeable in its Doctrine and Constitution to the purest Ages of the Gospel.*" Thus he expressed himself in the pious and affectionate Preamble to his last Will and Testament, which I may have Occasion

caſion afterwards to cite more at large. Well might the faithful Steward thus enjoy the Remembrance of his important Truſt, and review with Pleaſure the Courſe of a Miniſtry ſo instrumental to promote the Glory of God, and the Edification of his Church.

By Reaſon of a ſlow Succeſſion in the College he waited a long Time for a Fellowship, in which at length he ſucceeded the very Learned and Reverend Mr. *Edmund Chiſbull*, S. T. B. in *April*, 1706. Such a diſtant Proſpect of a competent Subſiſtance from a Fellowship, and in the mean time an indiſpenſible Obligation to Reſidence above three Parts in the whole Year, are Circumſtances, which I cannot but look upon as the moſt pitiable in a Society, on other Accounts the moſt eligible, and in its Conſtitution the beſt calculated for a Seminary of Divines. But even this Inconveniency was not without its Uſe. Neceſſity may be improved into a Virtue: The Advantages of living in the Univerſity were not in vain offered to Mr. *Rogers*. As he had too much Vivacity to live an unactive ſedentary Life,

he had also too much Seriousness not to follow the Business of his Profession. Accordingly he took upon himself the Care of a Country Parish *, about ten Miles distant from *Oxford*, in which he continued between five and six Years, most usefully and agreeably dividing his Time between the University and his Country Cure. No one more successfully studied the different Tempers and Inclinations of People, or more judiciously adapted his Instructions to their several Capacities. His Affability and Condescension admitted the meanest Parishioner into his Conversation, while at the same Time he preserved his Authority among the greatest. How popular and acceptable a Preacher he was, is still remembered to his Honour; and of this the Parishioners gave a convincing Testimony in voluntarily raising for his Benefit a handsome Subscription for a Sermon in the Afternoon every Sunday, which after his leaving them was soon discontinued. The Time spent in this Station, he used to say, was the happiest Part of his Life,

* The Vicarage of *Buckland* in *Berkshire*.

Life, tending no less to his Satisfaction and Improvement than the Edification of his People. From his Example I cannot help observing of how great Consequence it is to Clergymen in his Circumstances, to inure and habituate themselves to the Discharge of the several Duties of their sacred Function, which is the chief End to which all their Studies are ultimately to be directed. How far preferable is such an Employment to the Life of a Clergyman wholly spent within the College Walls in inglorious Ease, or curious Speculation ; 'till at once he is called out into the World, a learned, unexperienced old Man, too regular and severe in Life to make Allowance for the Infirmary of his People, or too profoundly Wise to inform their Ignorance ?

It was a laudable Ambition that carried him out into the World, free from any Tincture of Vanity, free from any sordid Desires, or servile Compliances. Accordingly he entered upon a different Scene of Life, being in 1712, invited to *London*, and chosen Lecturer of *St. Clement's Dane*. His Abilities seemed to rise in Proportion to

the Exigencies of his Station ; and he gained a Popularity, without courting it. A graceful Gesture, a clear pathetick Elocution, recommended his Discourses from the Pulpit ; and he appeared to feel those Impressions, which he would communicate to his Audience. Upon the whole, with regard both to the Matter and Manner of his Performance, he might justly be reckoned one of the most eloquent and instructive Preachers of his Time. His Reputation in this Respect was so well established, that out of Regard to his singular Merit, the Inhabitants of the United Parishes of *Christ-Church* and *St. Leonard's Foster-Lane*, unanimously chose him their Lecturer.

THO' he was naturally a Lover of Ease, and the Amusements of a private Life, yet he had also a Genius suited to any Kind of Business incident to a publick Station. He had a deep Insight into the State of Things, and a masterly Address in the Execution ; and his Friends have often experienced the Benefit of his good Offices in this Respect. The Easiness and Frankness of his Temper led many into his Familiarity, while
his

his discreet Conversation supported the Dignity of his Character. He continued many Years in this Capacity, all the while beloved and revered by his Parishioners, to whom he made suitable Returns in a conscientious Regard for their spiritual Welfare. A Testimony of his Affection and Piety in this Respect, the Reader will find in those farewell Sermons preached at the taking leave of his Parishioners, and published at their Request.

IN 1716, he was presented to the Rectory of *Wrington* in the County of *Somerset*; the same Year he resigned his Fellowship of C. C. C. in *Oxford*; and was married to the Honourable Mistress *Lydia Hare*, Sister to the Lord *Colerane*, who was his Pupil in the University. He found a ruinous old Parsonage-House, and a Parish in no small Disorder; he rebuilt the one, and reformed the other; being sparing neither of his Money, nor his good Offices; the one was the Effect of a good Fortune joined with a beneficent Mind; the other was wholly the Work of great Prudence and Virtue. To reconcile contending Parties engaged in chargeable and

vexatious Law-suits, to persuade *Presbyterians* into Conformity to the Established Church ; to convert the stubborn *Quaker* ; to conquer the Prejudices of Dissenters under various Denominations, teaching them to walk in the House of God as Friends, in the Unity of the Spirit, and the Bond of Peace : This was the continual Employment, this the Praise of the good Parish Priest. He had not in vain conversed with Mankind ; he understood the Workings of Human Nature, as well as the Exercise of his Function. Success attended his publick Preaching, and private Application ; some *Quakers* were baptized, the Number of *Presbyterians* gradually lessened, the younger People especially coming over to the Church ; and the Number of Communicants at the Sacrament much increased. Among other Monuments of his Zeal in this good Work, he had prepared for the Press a Discourse, suited, as near as might be, to the Understandings of those, for whose Use it was primarily designed, representing the Sin of Schism, and persuading the Dissenters to Conformity. The Nature of the Subject and the Reputation of the
Author

Author cannot but engage our Wishes that this Treatise may be communicated to the Publick.

It was the laudable Custom of the late Bishop of *Bath and Wells*, to call up to Preferments in his Cathedral, those Clergymen who were beneficed in his Diocese. The Rector of *Wrington's* Merit was too well known, to pass long unregarded on this Occasion. Accordingly by the Favour of the Bishop, and the Dean and Chapter, he was elected Canon Residentiary in the Church of *Wells*. Need I mention his Beneficence in repairing and adorning an old Prebendal House? Instances of more substantial Merit demand our Praise: He was not in vain distinguished by his Dignity in the Cathedral: He looked upon the Eminence of his Situation as an Incitement to a more exemplary Behaviour, and an additional Call upon him to exert his superior Abilities in the Cause of Religion. He in all Respects did Credit to his Station, not abusing the honourable Leisure he there enjoyed in luxurious Ease, or ostentatious Hospitality, but devoting it to the Duties of his Profession, and the Service

vice of *Christ's Church*. He used to set a just Value upon his Time, which he so usefully employed. Though he was of a generous and chearful Temper, and a Lover of innocent Mirth and Conversation, yet he never cared to prostitute a large Portion of the Day in officious Trifling and Compliment to the Humours of impertinent and idle Company, leaving the Praise of such Good-nature and Popularity to those, who did not know how to improve their Hours to greater Advantage to themselves or others. The great Business of his Calling, private Reading, and Meditation, and Service of his Friends chiefly engaged his Time, even to the Neglect of his own secular Affairs, and, what was of more Importance, his Health. He paid a regular Attendance at the Cathedral, in which he bore also the Office of Sub-dean. As he never declined any Duty belonging to his Station, so he discharged it to the best Advantage; *viz.* in his own Person, without the Assistance of a Substitute. He was a diligent Preacher; and among other Fruits of his Labour, he there delivered a Series of excellent Sermons, which I shall take
Occasion

Occasion to mention hereafter. The Number of them, the Subject-Matter and Manner of Writing, would incline me to think that they primarily were designed for another Audience. Such they are, as might justly add to the Credit of the Honourable Mr. Boyle's Institution, and be reckoned among some of the best Performances on that Occasion.

THE Praise of a good Preacher he may enjoy in common with many others, but in one Point, as difficult in the Execution, as it appears easy in the Attempt, he had few Equals; and that was the Management of Controversy. In this respect, with a View to the publick Good, I shall venture to recommend him as a Pattern of good Writing. A clear Head, and a dispassionate Heart, a comprehensive Knowledge, and a certain Moderation or Greatness of Mind intent on the glorious Pursuit of Truth, and not to be diverted by any personal Regards, or any other mean Views, are Qualifications that are but seldom found in the same Man, and may therefore be justly celebrated in the Character of our Author.

HE

xxviii *An Account of the*

HE that would take a View of the several Controversies on foot, and the Manner in which they have been managed by some Writers, would be apt to impute the Occasion of them to some wrong Motive ; such as Ill-nature, Vanity, and Affectation of Singularity. Some seem to have wrote merely to get the Name of Authors, some for their own Humour, some for the Diversion of the Reader, and some for the Profit of the Bookseller. 'Tis observable that in religious Disputes especially, which require the greatest Moderation and Impartiality, Mens Passions are more apt to be inflamed ; and their busy Wit is exercised, not in calmly stating the Question under Debate, but in insidious Cavils, smart Repartees, and personal Reflections. In the Heat of the Dispute they forget the only justifiable End of Controversy, and accordingly do not appear so solicitous to establish the Truth, as to triumph over their Adversary's Weakness, to invalidate his Way of Reasoning, and to justify their own ; to act the Part rather of Opponents, than Respondents ; to confute, rather than to convince ; to object much, but affirm little.

Some

Some there are, who, like hardened *Veterans*, delight in this kind of War: Sometimes they seem wanton in Boldness, and make Advances toward a general Attack; at other Times they act over-cautiously, covering their Designs with a disingenuous Reservedness, or skirmish behind some Entrenchment; or, upon being hard pushed, by artful Evasions shew their Skill in the modern Science of Defence. These are the ordinary Faults incident to controversial Writings; and it is no common Praise of our Author to say, that few ever stood more free from such Imputations.

'Tis well known what Controversy disturbed the Peace of the Church in 1717, and some Years following. The Occasion of it need not be mentioned; and it were to be wished, that its mischievous Effects may not perpetuate its Remembrance. Most of the Parties engaged are still living: And perhaps the deserved Commendation of a particular Writer may give some Offence; yet, I hope not to those, who always allowed him the Character of a fair and candid Disputant. He considered Controversy about religious
Points

Points especially, as a Matter of Conscience, in which a strict Regard to Justice and Charity was to be observed. With how honest a Design he engaged in it, his Management throughout the whole is the best Proof. A Christian Zeal prompted him to the Undertaking, a Christian Moderation conducted him in the Execution. He had for some Time attentively observed the Progress of the Dispute : He observed, among some other Points, certain Propositions advanced concerning the Church in indefinite Terms, of an exceptionable Meaning, such as in their natural Consequences were apprehended to be inconsistent with the Notion of a regular Society. The Debate soon grew warm ; on one Hand the Charge was urged Home with Aggravations ; on the other, Complaint was made of Misrepresentations, and an Answer offered ; but such it seems, as did not give Satisfaction, or remove the Grounds of Offence. In these Circumstances, some Interposition appeared necessary, in order to reconcile, if possible, this Variance ; at least to give a just State of the Point in Debate, by considering distinctly the

the Assertions which had given the Offence, with those Restrictions and Limitations under which they were defended ; so that it might appear upon the whole, in what Sense and what Degree they were true or false, and thus the Dispute might be brought to a fair Issue.

WITH this View he published his *Discourse concerning the Visible and Invisible Church*, not by way of personal Controversy, but direct Assertion ; in which he set forth at large those two distinguishing Relations, under which the Church stood considered ; and the several Properties which resulted respectively from each. The great End of his Writing was to inform and direct the Judgment of his Readers. Accordingly he has cleared the Subject from those Perplexities, in which some had industriously involved it ; laying down plain Principles, and tracing them through a regular Series of Conclusions ; and whenever the Point stood in need of a direct and full Explication, he never kept himself within the cautionary Reserves of a Defendant, but endeavoured to give all possible Satisfaction to the serious Enquirer, with Openness

ness and Sincerity of Heart declaring the whole Truth. Had those whom he opposed, been equally explicit in their Declarations, and imitated that Impartiality, which they could not but approve, I am persuaded that this Controversy, which was carried to such a mischievous Length, would have been brought into a narrow Compass, and have been more amicably determined : Misunderstandings would have been removed, Mistakes rectified, and false Opinions more solidly confuted.

THIS Discourse was favourably received by the Publick, and distinguished by the then Dean of *Worcester's* Approbation and Mr. *Sykes's* Animadversions. The Opposition from this Quarter, however in itself unreasonable, nevertheless proved indirectly the Occasion of some Benefit to the Publick, as it was the Occasion of our Author's writing his *Review of his Discourse concerning the Visible and Invisible Church*. In this Work, he has more fully done Justice to his Argument, and more explicitly unfolded and supported his Principles, pursuing them through their several Conclusions, and pointing out their Appli-

Application to particular Cases. And with regard to the Cavils and Objections offer'd against his former Positions, he has with much Patience considered and answered them so unexceptionably, as to preclude any farther Opposition from those who seem'd ambitious of being thought Controversial Writers. And though the very Form of the Disputation, as it was a Reply to the Exceptions of an Opponent, and of Course contain'd many Particularities *ad hominem*, was such as he was very unwillingly drawn into ; yet has he constantly kept the main Point in view, being no farther solicitous to confute his Adversary, than it was necessary in order to clear up and establish the Truth. And so well has he succeeded, that this very Performance may hereafter be read as an impartial and satisfactory State of the Question under Debate ; and Posterity will have the highest Esteem for our Author, when the Remembrance of all personal Circumstances in the Controversy shall be entirely lost.

UPON the whole, he may not improperly be said to have put an End to this Dispute ; not only as he was in Order of Time

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perhaps

perhaps the last Writer upon the Subject, but as he handled it in such a masterly and decisive Manner, and brought it to that Issue, upon which it has rested ever since.

AND I think I should do some Honour to my *Alma Mater* on this Occasion, if I called him the *Oxford Disputant*. The University certainly did not think themselves unconcerned in his Credit; they had a just Regard for the signal Services which he had done the Church, and accordingly expressed their Acknowledgments in the most handsome Manner, by conferring on him the Degree of *D. D.* by *Diploma*, in 1721. This publick and honourable Testimony given to his extraordinary Merit, without his Desire or Knowledge, prevented indeed his Performance of the Exercises, which would have done Honour to the University: However, he was appointed and desired to preach the publick Sermon, on the *Act Sunday* following, which also he published at the Request of the Vice-chancellor.

WE may now consider him for a few Years disengaged indeed from any Controversies, but not idly employed in the Business of his Calling. He was particularly exercised in one Branch of a Clergyman's Duty, and that not less difficult than useful; viz. that of a Casuist resolving Scruples in Points of Religion. Frequent Applications were made to him on this Account. His singular Discretion in the Manner of Address gained Attention; and the Opinion of his Integrity and good Will recommended his Advice, and gave Authority to his Arguments; and the many good Offices done in this Respect, were afterwards gratefully acknowledg'd by the Parties concerned. He was more especially consulted by Persons in Danger of being seduced into Popery. Hence followed Conferences, or Correspondences: Some small Treatises on several Points were occasionally drawn up for the private Use of his Friends; one of which in the Year 1726, he publish'd, bearing this Title, *Reasons against Conversion to the Church of Rome, in a Letter to his Guardian, a late Convert to that Church, by a Student in the Temple.* In this Treatise only one Part

of the Popish Controversy, but that a fundamental one, is most accurately discuss'd, *viz.* the Infallibility of the Church of *Rome*. The Reader will observe something new and singular in the Manner of managing the Argument, and the vain Pretensions of the *Romanists* to that Character overthrown by nothing less than the Evidence of Demonstration, such as all their Arts of Sophistry could neither resist nor elude.

He distinguished himself in every Station as a publick-spirited Man and a Favourer of all generous Designs. He had more particularly at Heart the Interest of two Institutions, *viz.* Charity-Schools, and the Corporation for the Relief of Clergymens Widows and Children. He constantly exerted himself on this Occasion, and contributed to the Support of both, by the private Influence of his Recommendation among his Friends, by the Example of his own Liberality, and by his Eloquence from the Pulpit. With a peculiar Pleasure he attended upon all publick Solemnities for the promoting these Designs; but then to the greatest Advantages, when he appear'd the Orator of the Congregation; his undissim-
bled

bled Zeal and Emotion of Spirit gave Life and Energy to his Discourse, and inflamed the Hearts of his Audience. His Sermons on those Occasions are published. I am persuaded the Reader will peruse them with no small Satisfaction, though he has lost one Advantage which no Description can recal.

IN 1726, by the Recommendation of some eminent Persons, who were desirous to call out such Merit into publick View, he was made Chaplain to his present Majesty, then Prince of *Wales*, an Honour unexpected and unfought; which he soon afterwards took Occasion to acknowledge in the most decent Manner, in the Dedication of that excellent Series of Sermons on the *Necessity of a divine Revelation, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation.*

WHILE these were in the Press, there came out a notable Performance, entituled *The Scheme of literal Prophecy considered, &c.* containing a Defence of some Notions, which he had in those Discourses opposed, and withal, a Plea for an unbounded universal Liberty in Matters of Religion; a

xxxviii *An Account of the*

Point, which in some former Treatises, he had attentively considered. He therefore thought proper in a Preface to this Volume, to bestow some Animadversions on these Principles of Licentiousness; which, being written in much Haste, and with an honest Zeal for the Defence of our Religious Establishment, and on a Point which requires some Tenderness and Caution in the handling, seemed liable to some Exception, or rather to demand a more full and distinct Explication. This gave Occasion to a Letter from his Friend Dr. *Nath. Marshall*, Dec. 20, 1727. which, with our Author's satisfactory Answer, dated the 1st of *January* following, is communicated to the Publick. From this Epistolary Correspondence the Reader may observe the great Difference, there is in the Management of a Debate, between Friends jointly engaged in the Pursuit of Truth, and between controversial Writers impatient of Contradiction, lying in wait for Matter of fresh Cavil, and never willing to come to the Truth.

It is not to be wondered that our Author should be attacked on this Head by some
zealous

zealous Advocates for Liberty, Men dissatisfied with all Restraints, and professed Enemies to our Religious Establishment. Accordingly, he soon received the expected Compliments from that Quarter. A long Letter was addressed to him by an anonymous Writer; and another Gentleman in a Preface to a Treatise foreign to this Purpose, has gone out of his Way to honour him with many opprobrious Reflections. Thereby giving Occasion to some masterly Strokes of the Doctor's superior Genius, triumphing over the Weakness of an acute angry Caviler, in the various Expressions of Pitying, Advising, Reproving, Confuting Forgiving *. It seems the Scheme of Liberty was a specious and plausible Topick for popular Harangue, and a few noisy Words might pass for Eloquence. Where solid Proofs are wanting, it was easy to advance bold Assertions, and to confute by Misrepresentations; and as for proper Embellishments of the Performance, Scurrillity and Ridicule might be plentifully laid on. On the other Hand, to hold the Ba-

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lance

* Introduct. to Vindicat. Civil Establish. p. 5.

lance between contending Parties, to adjust the respective Claims of Liberty and Authority, and ascertain the Limits of Right and Wrong in Cases where generally some Pre-engagement of Interest leads Men into Excess on one Side or other, is a Work of no less Nicety than Importance, such as requires a comprehensive Knowledge of an abstruse Subject, and an uncorrupted Heart, as well as a distinguishing Head. This was reserved for Dr. Rogers: This completed the Praise of the Controversial Writer. He had already established the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation, in Opposition to Deists and Infidels. He had fully asserted Ecclesiastical Authority, in Opposition to those who seemed to deny the *internal* Powers and Rights of the Christian Church, considered as a *Visible Society*: It now remained, that in Opposition to those, who would deprive the Church of all *external* Advantages arising from the Protection of the *Civil Magistrate*, he should vindicate the *Civil* Establishment of Religion. This he undertook, and successfully executed: He has deduced the Magistrate's Right to this Power from

from such clear Principles, and so accurately ascertained its Limits, that it appears to be free from all Objection, but what lies equally against all Authority committed to fallible Men, *viz.* that it may be abused. So that upon the whole, he may not improperly be called a Defender of our Church; a Name, ever to be mentioned with Honour among our *English* Divines, and to be joined with that of his Master *Hooker*, to whom he stands most nearly allied in the Praise of his Performance, as well as the Similitude of his Subject. Whether we regard moral or intellectual Qualities, I am persuaded he will appear a most excellent Writer, and Posterity, by imitating, will praise the good Example. We find in him the Accuteness of a Critick, the close Reasoning of a Logician, the good Manners of a Gentleman, and Charity of a Christian: On all Occasions a true Greatness of Mind, disdaining every Pursuit but that of Truth; above all Party Views, and personal Altercations; and incapable of the common little Arts of Evasions, Dissimulations and Misrepresentations: A Quickness of Wit that gave Life and
Beauty

Beauty to his Compositions ; a Spirit either insensible or superior to Injuries and Slander, such as could condemn with Silence, rebuke with Gravity, or forgive with Meekness : In the Management of his Argument an Honesty and Sincerity, which few observe amidst the Heat of the Disputation ; an Impartiality and Candor, which his Opponents cannot but allow ; a Perspicuity of Style and Sentiment, which they cannot honestly misinterpret ; and a Strength of Reasoning, which they can no more gainsay than imitate.

IN 1726, having resigned his Lecture of *St. Clement's Dane*, he retired from *London* with an Intention to spend the remaining Part of his Life in the Country, and chiefly at *Wrington*, which Place he had doubly endeared to himself, both by a considerable Expence of Money, and Merit of Contrivance. He was now returned to that Situation in Life, to which he naturally was most inclined ; and again commenced a good plain Countryman, employed in manuring his Land, Planting, and other like Operations of Husbandry, and with Complacency enjoying the Fruits of his Industry.

stry. Something he would learn from the Conversation of every one : And was no less sollicitous to acquire the Knowledge of other Men in their several Ways, that communicative of his own. It was observable of him, that while he lived in *London*, and had frequent Intercourses with Tradesmen of various Denominations, he improved that Circumstance into a Means of getting some Insight into their respective Trades, and was esteemed in those Matters, which seem farthest removed from the Notice of a Scholar, a Man of remarkable Understanding and Judgment. The same curious and inquisitive Temper, and close Application of Mind, rendered him Master of whatever Business he was pleased to take in Hand. He had a Head as well turned for the Mechanical as the Liberal Arts ; and in truth he made the Exercise of the one subservient to the other. In his Leisure he was not unactive ; and would often use some manual Trade, by way of Recreation to his Mind fatigued by severe Study : His House and Gardens were the Scene of his Labour and Diversions : He had Tools and Implements of various Kinds,
and

and would often do the Work of a Painter, Upholsterer, Turner, and Smith. In his Garden he would dig, mow, plant, prune, and turn his Hand to any Garden Operation whether laborious or ingenious. The Reader will perhaps smile at the Mention of such trifling Circumstances in the Character of a great Man : But even these Peculiarities may appear worthy of some Notice, as they account for the Disposition of the leisure Intervals of his Time filled up with so innocent and useful Amusements, and are moreover Marks of a rare Genius, suited to a Variety of Employments so different in Kind ; and especially, since they appear to have been so far from interfering with his more serious Studies, that the two last valuable Pieces which he published, were drawn up amidst the Series of such mechanical Diversions.

He was never ambitious of being thought a great Scholar : His Learning was for Use, not for Ostentation : He neither collected nor read many Books, nor was curious in their Editions. A few well chosen, and studied to good Purpose, communicate more real Knowledge, than a copious slowly-growing Common-place-book. Not to mention

mention others, he appeared more particularly conversant in the Writings of the judicious Mr. *Hooker*, and the ingenious Mr. *Norris*, and he made their Excellencies his own. No one more attentively examined his own Notions, or digested them more methodically ; serious Meditation effected what could never be attained by mere Assiduity of Reading. His Attention and Patience in the Pursuit of Truth, were equal to his Quickness and Sagacity ; and continual Exercise strengthened and enlarged his Capacities. As a masterly Reasoner he paid a just Deference to Authority, yet admitted no Principle implicitly without mature Examination, and regularly worked out his own Conclusions. In short, he may be truly said to have built upon his own Bottom, being, what few can justly boast of, thoroughly acquainted with the Extent of his own Abilities, and a compleat Master of his own Knowledge.

IN the latter End of the Summer, 1728, his Course of Waiting as King's Chaplain called him to *Windsor*, where the Court then resided. He had seldom appeared on this Stage ; few were acquainted with his Person :

son : The Courtier was unknown, but the Preacher soon distinguished himself to Advantage : His Performances in the Pulpit were honoured with the general Approbation ; and the new Chaplain engaged the Notice of the Inquisitive ; and was, as I have heard, not less honourably than oddly described by the Character of the *visible and invisible* ROGERS. One noble Lord in particular, being more than ordinarily affected with the Matter and Manner of his Discourses, was pleased to favour him with some singular Marks of Kindness and Condescension, and such Expressions of Esteem, as might well have flattered the Vanity, and raised the Ambition of a Mind covetous of Applause and Preferment. But all Overtures of this Nature were declined with the same Generosity of Spirit, with which they were offered. The Doctor had always an honest Openness in his Manners, and on proper Occasions a Stateliness of Address, suitable to the Greatness of his Mind. He was so much above many fashionable Littlenesses, that some, who judge only from Appearance of trifling Circumstances, have thought him a proud Man,
from

from which Imputation no one in Reality was more free. And his Behaviour on that Juncture, as it shewed a just Sense of that Lord's Goodness, which he ever acknowledged with Gratitude, at the same time also discovered an Instance of a laudable Pride, not often seen in Persons of his Station, studiously refusing those Advantages, which some perhaps would admire with Envy, and most would have improved with the closest Application. "As his Duty had called him up to the Court, it now called him away to another Place, from which no other Views could detain him."

So he hastened into the Country; but he had not been there many Days before he was surprized by a most generous Invitation to Town from Persons, whose Approbation thus expressed, was an abundant Testimony of his high Merit. For about this Time died the Rev. Dr. *Thomas Bennet*, Vicar of *St. Giles's, Cripplegate*, a City Living, in the Patronage of the Dean and Chapter of *St. Paul's*; very considerable in its value, yet attended with some discouraging Circumstances, or rather such as required a great Share of Prudence and secular Wisdom

Wisdom in the Minister, as well as other Qualifications.

THE Dean of *St. Paul's* and *Dr. Godolphin* concurred in their favourable Opinion of *Dr. Rogers*; his well known Abilities pointed him out to them as a Person most worthy of this important Cure. Accordingly upon this laudable Motive an Offer of it was made him in the most handsome Manner, much to the Doctor's Honour, because without his Sollicitation or Knowledge; nor less to the Honour of the judicious and publick-spirited Patrons. The Christian Reader will prevent me in my farther Reflections on this Point, and join with me in Wishes for the Good of our Church, that all Patrons would imitate the Example, which they cannot but approve.

WITH what undissembled Anxiety and Reluctance he accepted this Offer, they well remember who were most intimately acquainted with him. The mere Consideration of a large Income was a Motive of too little Force to draw him from that Situation of Life, in which he had proposed to himself the greatest Satisfaction. As
he

he had never shewn any Discontent, while his Preferment was far inferior to his Merit; so now the Advantages of a Fortune, which was of late considerably advanc'd, were far from making that Alteration in his Manners, which has been observ'd frequently to happen on such Occasions; tho' he was grown competently Rich, yet he aim'd not at farther Acquisitions. However, some peculiar Circumstances of an Invitation, so honourable and unexpected, had greater Weight with him than other Considerations; and his Acceptance plainly appear'd to proceed not from the Desire of a lucrative Preferment, but rather out of Obedience to a Call, providentially offering him an Opportunity of doing more good, in Proportion to the Difficulty and large Extent of his Cure. With this View he came to *Cripplegate*, and his Behaviour all along verified his Professions; and if it had pleas'd God to have prolong'd his Life, the People in that Place would doubtless have enjoy'd the lasting Benefit of his good Offices in all Respects, and it would have been no *Hyperbole* to say, there was a Vicar of *Cripplegate*, a popular Man in his Parish.

THE little Time he liv'd among them was wholly devoted to their Service, in visiting the Sick, catechising the Children, and, which he had much at Heart, regulating the Charity-Schools; and moreover, which created him no small Trouble, diligently enquiring into the perplex'd State of the Parish Affairs, in order to set them on a better Footing, and to extricate them out of some Difficulties in which they were lately involv'd. A sincere Desire to do Service to his Parish in these Respects engag'd his continual Application, even to the Neglect of his own Health. In Truth, he was a Person of a rare Genius, equal to any Kind of Employment; of a Greatness of Mind incapable of being discourag'd by small Obstacles, or disturb'd by petty Provocations, or any Way diverted from the Pursuit of a laudable End. But this very Vivacity and unwearyed Vigour which had hitherto carried him through every Undertaking, did in reality do Violence to his Constitution, by making him less sensible of any Danger, and gradually wasted away a valuable Life, by not admitting the timely Precautions
necessary

necessary to it's Preservation——

—— Δαιμόνιε, φθίσεν σε τὸ τὸν μέν !

IN *April* he happen'd to be in waiting at Court, and on *Sunday* the 20th Instant, after the Fatigue of a long Walk from *Cripplegate*, after officiating in his own Church, he preached a Sermon before the Royal Audience, his last Performance in the Pulpit, and Farewell to the World: And though he found himself a little indisposed after the Hurry of the Day, yet that very Night, in Compliance with the Desire of some of his Parishioners, at a late Hour he attended and officiated at a Funeral. The Day following he went to Court again, and in the Afternoon he called upon his Sister, Mrs. *Bedwell*, not with that Air of Chearfulness, with which he usually appeared in that House, but with Looks discomposed and full of Uneasiness, complaining of an uncommon Disorder that sat heavy upon him, and pathetically expressed his Apprehension of his approaching Fate, with Reflections on that Point well worthy of a Christian Priest. Finding his Illness increase upon him after he came Home, he at length patiently took his Bed, without

much Hopes of Recovery. He felt inward Convictions of his Danger, which did not discover itself to his Physicians by any violent Symptoms. And accordingly, when human Assistances fail'd, he had Recourse to the only Fountain of true Comfort. I need not recount many affecting Circumstances in this critical Juncture, which might awaken the Tendernefs, and aggravate the Sorrows of those nearest Friends, who attended him during that melancholy Scene. Let it briefly be remarked, that amidst this Conflict he was not wanting to himself in any Respect; he gave direction about his Affairs with the utmost Composedness of Mind, and in the most affectionate Manner took Leave of his Friends. He appear'd sensible to the last; and much he labour'd to speak, but his faltering Tongue dropped short imperfect Sentences. But as long as he could articulate Sounds, he was heard to mention with Earnestness *Christ* and his Church; and seem'd to be in the Fervency of continual Prayer—There is something more than the bare Consideration of our common Mortality that strikes the Mind on this Occasion:
The

Life of the Author. liii

The Reflection on the Good he has done, the Anticipation of Great Things still expected from such Abilities and Virtues, the Disappointment of these Expectations by his untimely Death, are Circumstances which create a serious Sollicitude and publick-spirited Sorrow ; which, while they redound to his Honour, aggravate the Sense of our Loss: In this View we may esteem his Death a Sort of publick Misfortune ; and have Reason to wish that the Influence of his Example may follow the Respect done to his Memory, that our holy Church may never be destitute of such worthy Sons, for the Ornament and Defence of its Constitution.

THUS died this excellent Man, *May 1*, in the 50th Year of his Age, much honoured and lamented, at a Time when the Cause of Religion call'd for the Abilities of such an able Defender. On *Sunday* the 18th, at the Request of his Widow, a Sermon on this Occasion was preached by his Friend *Dr. N. Marshall*, in the Parish Church of *St. Giles, Cripplegate*, out of which I beg leave to transcribe or extract his Character, as it there occurs summ'd up in general Terms, *p.* 29. “ I should

“ not mention among the Praises due to
“ him, that clear, comprehensive, and
“ strong Understanding God has given him,
“ but for the excellent Uses to which he
“ applied it. His Works will praise him,
“ when our Lips can no longer perform
“ the grateful Office ; The Infidel and Li-
“ bertine may stand thence corrected or
“ instructed ; as the Serious and faithful
“ may thence derive a farther Support and
“ Confirmation in their respective Senti-
“ ments and Practices. Had he been born
“ of a Parentage which had easily led him
“ to the highest Stations in Life, he was
“ amply qualified for sustaining and adorn-
“ ing them ; as in a lower Figure of Life
“ and Fortune he was equally pitied for
“ improving, or being content with it. A
“ Mind so exquisitely form’d for any Situ-
“ ation, any Posture of Affairs, to which
“ the Providence of God might have call’d
“ him ; such an Indifference toward the
“ Honours and Profits of this Life, with
“ such Abilities to have acquired the one,
“ and to have adorned the other, are Ta-
“ lents rarely to be met with in the same
“ Person, and very hardly to be imitated
“ by

“ by any other. It fell to my Lot to give
“ him that earliest Notice of his Invitation
“ to this extensive Cure, which I am mo-
“ rally sure, ’till then he had never thought
“ of, much less sought after, or canvassed
“ for it. His Answer convinced me that
“ his own Choice would have rather fix’d
“ him in a rural Privacy, than have enter’d
“ him upon such a publick Scene of Ac-
“ tion : But a Call so unlooked for, so ut-
“ terly unexpected, he esteemed Providen-
“ tial ; as such he obeyed it, rather than
“ embraced it. He was an entire Despi-
“ ser of Craft and Cunning, that Ape of
“ Wisdom, the uglier for being so like it ;
“ yet with the Simplicity and godly Sincer-
“ ity of the honest *Christian*, with the
“ harmless Temper of the Dove, he had
“ such a due Proportion of the Serpent’s
“ Wisdom, that as he would impose upon
“ none, so he was not himself easily im-
“ pos’d upon. His Religion was pure and
“ unaffected. His Piety real and rational,
“ zealous without Excess, and temperate
“ without any faulty Coldness, free from
“ supercilious Reserves and haughty Ap-
“ pearances ; but agreeably season’d with

“ a peculiar Liveliness of Spirit, as well
“ as all fit Urbanity and Freedom of Con-
“ verse. Of his publick Spirit, he has
“ left behind him very costly Monuments
“ in the several Cures, to which he stood
“ for any time related. Upon the whole,
“ in our Loss of this worthy Man, this
“ pious *Christian*, this vigilant Pastor, Re-
“ ligion in general has lost an able Cham-
“ pion, the Church of *England* in parti-
“ cular a prudent and strenuous Defender,
“ this District particularly, so lately com-
“ mitted to his Care, a discreet, faithful,
“ and watchful Overseer; as his Friends
“ and Relatives have sustained an irrepara-
“ ble Misfortune from it. Yet let us not
“ sorrow as Men without Hope for them
“ who die in the Lord, &c.” Thus far
Dr. *Marshall* in the close of his Discourse,
giving this publick Testimony to the Ho-
nour of his deceased Friend, which exactly
agrees in Substance with the Particulars
mentioned here at large.

I HAVE had Occasion already to quote
a Clause out of the Preamble to his Will:
It may not be amiss to recite the whole Pa-
ragraph, written between three and four
Years

Life of the Author. lvii

Years before his Death, which being presumed to express the most serious and sincere Thoughts of the Writer, may perhaps give a fuller Idea of his truly Christian Piety than the *Elogium* of any Historian. It is as follows :

“ **I** John Rogers, Rector of *Wrington*, in the County of *Somerset*, in the Name of the holy and ever blessed Trinity, do make and appoint my last Will and Testament in the Manner and Form following :

“ *First*, I THINK myself now and at all Times obliged to return my humble Thanks to Almighty God, thro’ whose Mercy I have been baptized into the Christian Faith, and called to the Honour of the Priesthood, in the Church of *England*, which I reverence, as most agreeable in its Doctrine and Constitution to the purest Ages of the Gospel : Beseeching the divine Goodness to continue his holy Protection over it ; to heal its unhappy Divisions, to repair the Breaches of its Discipline, and defend it from
“ those .

“ those many Enemies who labour its Sub-
“ version. And I earnestly intreat my
“ most merciful God, to pardon whatever
“ in my Life has been less agreeable to
“ the Purity of that Religion, which I
“ have professed, and to the Dignity of
“ that Office, which I have taken upon
“ me ; to accept my weak Endeavours to
“ serve him and his Church, and to receive
“ my Soul washed and cleansed in the
“ Blood of *Jesus Christ* my Saviour, to
“ whom be Glory for ever and ever, *Amen.*”

UPON Review of the whole, I am sensible that this Account of the Life and Writings of Dr. *Rogers* is far from being perfect. They who were more intimately acquainted with him, will find many Omissions, and perhaps some slight mistakes in Circumstances of Facts. Others will, perhaps, think this Narrative already too circumstantial and tedious. Besides, in praising a controversial Writer, some Reflections will of Course be dropt, which may be thought exceptionable by those of the opposite Side of the Question. I hope the Reader will excuse Faults which could not easily

easily be avoided. As on one hand it were a needless Caution to dissemble Notice of what is too obvious to be concealed, so on the other I would not willingly give just Ground of Offence to any: And I am persuaded that Dr. Rogers's Character needs not to be set off to Advantage by the Disparagement of any other.

HE was buried in the Parish Church of *Ensham* in *Oxfordshire*, on *Tuesday, May 13*, where a very handsome Monument is erected to his Memory by his Widow, with the Inscription following:

Hic juxta cineres Paternos
Corpus suum sepeliri voluit
JOHANNES ROGERS, S. T. P.
Magni Vir animi,
Ad fortunam omnem,
Ad munus omne,
Sive sustinendum,
Sive ornandum,
Ita insigniter compositus,
Ut illus qui recensuerit titulos,
Idem quoque simul laudaverit Virtutes.

Floruit

Floruit aliquando
 In C. C. C. Oxon. Discip. & Soc.
 Vicariæ de Bucknand in Com. Berk.
 Per Annos complures Curat.
 Apud Londinenses Concionator ;
 In Com. Somerset. Rector de Wrington ;
 Ecclesiæ Wellensis Canon. & Subdecan.
 Regiæ Majestati à Sacris ;
 Postremo Sti. Ægidii de Cripplegate apud
 Londin. Vicarius.

Ingenii Monumenta quæris ?
 Hic ille est qui Scripsit
 De Ecclesia Visib. & Invisib.
 De Relig. Christianæ Verit. Conciones 8.
 De jure Magistrat. Civil. in Relig. stabili-
 enda :
 Conciones porro Miscellan. complures.
 En ! quod imiteris Scriptor
 Concionandi &
 Disputandi
 Exemplar consummatissimum.
 En ! quem in vita Ducem sequeris,
 Eundem optimum
 Et Civem, & Sacerdotem.

Hac

Hac in Parœcia Natus 1679.
Patre Clerico,
Clericis Majoribus,
Quinquagenarius obiit Maii 1^{mo} 1729.

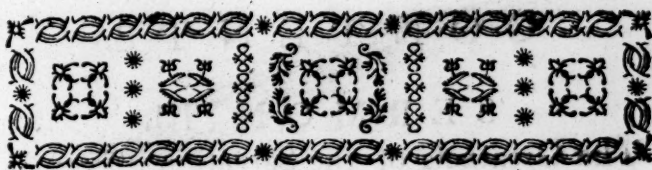
Uxorem habuit Lydiam,
Henrici Baronis de Colerane sororem,
Filiis superstites reliquit Duas.

Quod Viri de Ecclesia, deque Repub. optime meriti memoriam commendaret Posteris, suæque insuper erga conjugem Amantissimum pietatis Monumentum extaret, honorarium hoc Marmor erexit

LYDIA ROGERS.



THE



THE
CONTENTS.

S E R M O N. I.

THE Nature and Influence of the
Fear of God.

P S A L M xxxiii. 8.

*Let all the Earth fear the Lord, stand in
Awe of him all ye that dwell in the World.*

Page 1

S E R M O N II.

A Sufficiency with Regard to Mens Stations in Life adjusted and recommended.

P R O V. xxx. 8, 9.

*Give me neither Poverty nor Riches; feed
me with Food convenient for me: Lest I
be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the
Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and
take the Name of my God in vain. 21*

S E R-

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N III.

The Greatness of the Salvation offered in the Gospel, and the extreme Danger of neglecting it.

H E B. ii. 3.

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? Page 45

S E R M O N IV.

A Conformity to this World inconsistent with our Duty and Happiness.

R O M. xii. 2. former Part.

Be not conformed to this World. 67

S E R M O N V.

An Inordinate Love of this World, incompatible with the present and future Happiness of Man.

1 J O H N ii. 15. former Part.

Love not the World, neither the Things that are in the World. 85

S E R M O N VI.

An Exemption from falling, not to be expected in our present militant State.

1 C O R.

C O N T E N T S.

I C O R. x. 12.

*Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed
lest he fall.*

Page 103

S E R M O N. VII.

The Death and Sufferings of *Christ* foretold
and described.

Preached on GOOD-FRIDAY.

I S A. liii. 5.

*He was wounded for our Transgressions, he
was bruised for our Iniquities, the Cha-
stisement of our Peace was upon him, and
by his Stripes we are healed.*

123

S E R M O N VIII.

The Certainty of our own Resurrection in-
ferred from the Resurrection of *Christ*.

Preached on EASTER-DAY.

I C O R. xv. 23.

*Christ the First-Fruits, afterwards they that
are Christ's, at his Coming.*

145

S E R M O N IX.

A good Life the best Ornament of the Chri-
stian Profession.

d

TITUS

C O N T E N T S.

TITUS ii. 10. latter Part.

*That they may adorn the Doctrine of God our
Saviour in all Things.* Page 165

S E R M O N X.

The Advantages of conversing with good
Men, and the Inconveniences of a con-
trary Conduct.

P S A L M cxix. 63.

*I am a Companion of all them that fear thee,
and of them that keep thy Precepts.* 185

S E R M O N XI.

The great Advantages of good Discourse,
and the Mischiefs of the contrary.

E P H. iv. 19.

*Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of
your Mouth, but that which is good for
the Use of Edifying, that it may minister
Grace unto the Hearers.* 211

S E R M O N XII.

The great Duty of redeeming Time, and
the Danger of neglecting it.

E P H. v. 16.

*Redeeming the Time, because the Days are
evil.* 235

S E R M O N

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N XIII.

The Difficulties of Salvation to the Righteous, an Argument of Fear and Terror to Sinners.

1 P E T. iv. 18.

If the Righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear ? 261

S E R M O N XIV.

The Scripture Doctrine of Regeneration, or a New Creature, explained.

2 C O R. v. 17. former Part.

If any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature. 281

S E R M O N XV.

Universal Obedience to the Laws of God, the indispensable Obligation of Christians.

J A M E S ii. 10.

Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, is guilty of all. 307

S E R M O N XVI.

The Goodness of God a Motive to Repentance.

R O M. ii. 4. latter Part.

Not knowing that the Goodness of God leadeth thee to Repentance. 335

S E R M O N

CONTENTS.

SERMON XVII.

The Righteous Man the best Friend to the Community.

PROV. xii. 26. former Part.

The Righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour. Page 355

SERMON XVIII.

A prudent Conduct and Behaviour in Christians recommended and enforced.

ROM. xii. 17.

Provide Things honest in the Sight of all Men.

SERMON XIX.

The Duty and Advantages of Trust in God.

JEREM. xvii. 7.

Blessed is he that trusteth in the Lord, and whose Hope the Lord is. 399

26 JY 60

SERMON



S E R M O N I.

The Nature and Influence of the
Fear of G O D.



P S A L M xxxiii. 8.

*Let all the Earth fear the Lord:
Stand in Awe of him, all ye that
dwell in the World.*



U R Passions are the Springs
which actuate the Powers
of our Nature: If these are
either too weakly, or too
strongly moved, or misled,
by false Apprehensions of the Object, the
Productions must be proportionably defecti-
ve or irregular. And since the Fear of

B

God

2 *The Nature and Influence*

God is a Passion of the first and principal Influence in Religion, it is of the greatest Importance, that it be formed upon such Views, as may give it a proper Force and Direction.

I THEREFORE beg leave to enquire,

I. WHAT is the proper Awe and Fear, which is due from Man to God.

II. To suggest some Considerations which ought to possess our Souls with this Affection towards the Deity.

III. To observe the Influence this Affection will have on the Conduct of our Lives.

I. FEAR in general is that Passion of our Nature, whereby we are excited to provide for our Security upon the Approach of Evil. But when this Description is applied to the Fear of God, we are not to apprehend that God can be the Author of any Effect that is evil in itself, though it may by Accident be evil to us: His severest Inflictions are in themselves Acts of Justice and Righteousness, and flow from the

the Excellencies and Perfections of his Nature; though with respect to us, they have the Evil of Punishment, and demand this Regard of our Fear to him. The frequent Mistakes of Men in forming their Apprehensions of this Object of their Fear, and consequently of the Nature of that Respect which is due to him, has given Rise to that necessary Distinction of the Fear of God into a *servile* or *superstitious*, and a *filial* or *religious* Fear. The former we are to avoid as a Dishonour to God; the latter we are obliged to as an indispensable Duty, the true Spring and Motive of our Christian Obedience. When Men represent the Divine Nature to their Minds as the Author of Evil; as a Being averse from their Happiness, and armed with Power only for their Destruction; as an austere and rigorous Master, easily provok'd, and always lifting up his Hand to take Vengeance; such Conceptions must unavoidably raise in our Minds the Passion of Terror, a Dread of the Divine Nature, mixed with Abhorrence and Aversion, as from an Enemy whom we hate, but dare not resist. But this is so far from that Fear

which is a Duty required by God, that even the Devils are constrained to do this Homage to his Majesty, who believe and tremble. This is no other than that forced Respect a Captive pays to his Conqueror, a Slave to his Lord. And the Worship we are induced to offer from these mistaken Apprehensions of the Divine Nature, is a blasphemous Affront to his Perfections; since we worship him not as God, but as a cruel and tyrannical Being, the Idol of our Fears, and the Creature of our Superstition; and we might for the same Reasons adore the Malice and Power even of Hell itself.

THE Fear then which is acceptable to God, is a filial or religious Fear: An awful Reverence of the Divine Nature, proceeding from a just Esteem and Regard to his Perfections, which produces in us an Inclination to his Service, and an Unwillingness to offend him. This is a Duty we owe, in some Proportion, to all who stand in a superior Relation to us, and is in the fifth Commandment required towards our Prince and our Parent, under the Name of *Honour*; a Respect which in
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of the Fear of God. 5

the Notion of it implies a Mixture of Love and Fear; and in the Object equally supposes Goodness and Power. As a Son though he reverences the Authority of his Father, and is deterred by a just Apprehension of his Displeasure from daring to offend him; yet forgets not at the same time that he is concerned with the tenderest Affection for his Happiness, the Protector of his Weakness, and the Reliever of his Wants; one who will look on his Failings with Mercy, and even correct his Offences with Compassion: So though Religion demands our Reverence of God, as that Sovereign Power from whom we derive our Being, the Judge of all our Actions, and the Author and Disposer of our Happiness; tho' it represents him cloathed with Majesty and Honour, as the Supreme Ruler of the World, to whose Authority all Things in Heaven and Earth do bow and obey; yet it teaches us at the same Time to adore him as a mild and merciful Being, of infinite Love and Affection to his Creatures; as a Friend and a Father, whose Care supplies our Wants, and defends our Impotence; to whose Fa-

6 *The Nature and Influence*

your we owe all the Happiness we can receive here, and from whose Compassion in *Christ* we hope for eternal Glory hereafter. This is the proper Character of the Deity; and while we thus represent him to our Faith, as his Goodness will forbid us to dread him as Slaves, so his Majesty will command us to reverence him as Sons. But from that servile Dread we reprove as criminal, we must be careful to distinguish that Terror and Astonishment which is spread over the Conscience of the Sinner, when he first begins to reflect on the Danger of his State, and the Penalties he has incurred from the Justice of God. For though this Fear, in its first Impressions, be attended with very uncomfortable Views of the Divine Nature, and attends chiefly to the Extent of his Power, and the Rigor of his Justice; yet whenever it is effectual to our Conversion, and engages our Applications to appease his Anger, it cannot be without some Confidence in his Goodness, and a Regard to the more amiable Attributes of the Deity; and must consequently have also a less perfect Degree of that filial Reverence recommended by Religion.

FOR

Of the Fear of God.

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FOR if this Terror were merely that servile Dread which represents God as an implacable, inexorable Being, the Soul under such an Impression would sit down unactive, overwhelmed with an horrible Despair; and never engage in a fruitless Attempt to appease a Power, whom no Prayers could intreat, no Repentance reconcile. 'Tis plain therefore, that though this Fear be not that composed Reverence, with which the Soul looks on God in a State of confirmed Piety; yet neither is it that servile Dread, which flees from him as an hostile, unfriendly Being, delighting in the Misery of his Creatures. And therefore some of the Schools have used a middle Term to express this Affection, and have called it an *initial Fear of God*: A Disposition so far from being offensive to him, that it seems to be properly that broken and contrite Heart, with which a Soul under the Conviction of Sin ought to look upon its Judge; and what the Scripture emphatically calls the *Beginning of Wisdom*; a Temper, which, in the same Proportion as we apprehend the Justice of God to be pacified by our Repentance, will gradually

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improve

8 *The Nature and Influence*

improve into that filial Reverence accompanied with Love, which (as I observed) is the proper Affection of a confirmed Piety.

THESE Distinctions of the Fear of God give us a clear and easy Reconciliation of those seeming Inconsistencies of Scripture, with respect to this Affection: For when St. John tells us, *that perfect Love casteth out Fear*—and again, *that he that feareth, is not made perfect in Love*; these Assertions can no otherwise consist with those Scriptures which enjoin the Fear of God, and recommend it as the Whole of our Duty, than by understanding the former, either of that servile Dread which Reprobates and Devils have of God, or rather of that initial Fear which attends the imperfect Conversion of a Sinner; the latter, of that filial Reverence, which is the Strength and Ornament of the Soul, in a composed State of Religion.

THE *Nature of the Duty* thus explained, be pleased to attend me,

II. IN some Considerations that ought to possess our Souls with this Affection
towards

towards the Deity. Now every one of the Divine Perfections are Arguments for this Reverence towards him. Can we reflect on the infinite Knowledge and Omnipresence of God, and not stand in Awe of that Being, who is conscious to all our Failings and Infirmities, who is about our Bed and about our Path, who sees, observes, and records every Word and Action of our Lives, and from whom even the most secret Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart are not concealed? Or can we remember that he is infinitely just, without a religious Concern for the Event of that Day, when we must appear before his impartial Tribunal? Goodness, Holiness, and Mercy, are indeed the immediate Objects of our Love; but when we reflect on the infinite Disproportion, in which these Qualities are possessed by God, and the most perfect of his Creatures; that the Heavens are not pure in his Sight, and that he charges even his Angels with Folly; with how lowly a Reverence must we bow down our Souls before so excellent a Being, and adore a Nature so much superior to our own? But the Attribute which
espe-

10 *The Nature and Influence*

especially demands this Affection from us, is his Power. None can resist or interrupt the Execution of his Will; our Happiness and our Misery, our Souls and our Bodies are in his Hands; he has Power to save, and Power to destroy; nor is he accountable to any for his Dominion over us. If he be angry, every Creature that he has made, is ready to execute his Vengeance; and unless his Wrath be appeased, an Eternity of Torments awaits the Objects of his Displeasure. Now though a just Confidence in his Goodness must preserve us from a servile Dread of his Power, and Despair of his Mercy; yet so unlimited, so irresistible an Authority cannot be reflected on, without the most awful Reverence, even by those whose Piety assures its Favour to them. But these Arguments arising from the Perfections of the Deity, will yet more effectually possess us with this Reverence, if at the same Time we reflect with a just Humility on ourselves. That we are indigent, defenceless Beings; the Creatures of his Power, and the Dependants of his Providence; so far as we know, the lowest of all intelligent Beings; whose

of the Fear of God. 11

whose Strength is Weakness, and whose Wisdom is Folly. And, what is yet a more mortifying Consideration, we have provoked this Almighty Power by our Sins; have affronted his Goodness, despised his Counsel, and rebelled against his Authority. And if Prophets and Apostles, the favour'd of God, fell down with Reverence at the Feet even of his Angels; if *Moses* himself, though honoured with the Character of his Friend, was struck with exceeding Fear and Trembling, at the Glory of his Perfections; if even those holy and unoffending Spirits, the Angels of his Presence, veil their Faces, and bow down before the Throne of his Majesty; with what Awe and Reverence should we, sinful Dust and Ashes, approach that infinite Power we have so grievously offended; with what Humility implore his Pardon? To these Considerations of Duty, I might add also Motives of Interest recommending this Affection to us: I might observe with *Solomon* *, that *in the Fear of the Lord* there is a strong Confidence; that 'tis a Place of Refuge to his Children; that 'tis the best Preservative from all those temporal Fears and

* Prov. xiv. 26.

12 *The Nature and Influence*

and Disquietudes which corrupt the Enjoyment, and embitter the Lives of Men; since the Malice or Power of all inferior Beings, and even the Wills and Passions of Men, are but Instruments in the Hand of God, and consequently are no farther to be feared by us, than we apprehend him provoked to use them in our Punishment. But I shall insist only on one Argument taken from the Effect of this Fear, and that is what I

III. PROPOSED to consider: The Influence this Affection will have on the Conduct of our Lives.

IN general, the Effect of this Fear will be a sincere, universal Obedience to the Commands of God.

THE only Motives that can be imagin'd of our Obedience to the Laws of any Person, are either the Value and Certainty of the Rewards he proposes, together with an Assurance of his Inclination and Ability to confer them; or an Apprehension of his Justice and Severity in punishing our Disobedience. Now neither of these, exclusive of the other,

other, is the true Principle of our Obedience to God. For, if our Observance of the Divine Laws proceeded merely from an Opinion of his Inclination to our Happiness, whenever his Providence or Justice should think fit to visit us with any great Affliction, he would no longer appear that kind, benevolent Being we before worshipp'd; and consequently the Motive that engaged our Submission, would lose its Force on us. 'Twas with this imperfect Principle of Duty, that Satan reproached the Integrity of Job †. *Doth Job (said he) serve God for nought? Hast thou not made a Hedge about him, and about all that he hath? Thou hast blessed the Work of his Hands, and his Substance is increased in the Land. But put forth thine Hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy Face.*

INDEED if the Divine Laws were proposed to our Observance, with no other Motive than the Advantages attending it, they would be little more than an Advice,

† Job i. 9, 10, 11.

14 *The Nature and Influence*

vice, and have but a very weak Influence on the far greater Part of Mankind, who are more inclined to pursue their Happiness, in the Satisfactions that lie before them in this Life, than to wait on the Promises of a distant Reversion. 'Tis therefore necessary to engage also the Fears of Men by the Annexion of such Penalties, as by the Weight and Certainty of them will over-balance the Persuasions of Temporal Pleasure.

ON the other Side, if our Obedience were the Effect only of a Dread of the Power and Vengeance of God, it would be no better than the Submission of a Slave to the Tyranny of an insolent Master; and must want that Choice and Inclination, which alone can make our Obedience acceptable to God. As he requires a Submission to the Authority of his Commands, so he expects that Submission should be accompanied with an intire Trust in his Goodness, and Affection to his Service: By the former we adore him as the Lord and Governor of the World; by the latter as our Father which is in Heaven. The
proper

proper Motive therefore of our Christian Obedience, is that Fear which is made perfect by Love; that filial Reverence I have described and recommended, which has in it a just Mixture of both these Affections, and acts upon our Lives with the Force of both. This is a Principle adapted to every Passion and Faculty of our Nature, to every State and Condition of our Life; and, when rightly form'd, will direct us to the just Performance of our Duty in all; will equally prepare our Patience for the Day of Adversity, and engage our Gratitude to the Mercies of God; will suggest Tears to our Repentance, and Hallelujahs to our Praises; will make us receive his Favours as the Blessings, his Punishments as the Corrections of a Father. The Awe of his Majesty will keep us from Presumption, and the Promises of his Mercy from Despair: for as is his Majesty, so is his Mercy. Both these Attributes will be equally in our View, and concur to form the Disposition of the Soul. If this Principle were thoroughly fix'd in the Minds of Men, we should be ashamed of Hypocrisy, and tremble at
Prophane-

16 *The Nature and Influence*

Prophaneness; neither hope our Treachery could escape the Notice, nor our Blasphemies the Vengeance of God. Our secret Actions would be as regular as our public; our Devotions as great in the Closet as they appear in the Temple; We should perform every Instance of our Duty, not with Eye-service as Men-pleasers, but with the same Sincerity, with which we comply with the Desires of our Friend, or our Father: The least of his Commands would appear venerable to us, and the most difficult not grievous. In sum, this Affection will give Warmth to our Zeal, and Spirit to our Devotions; will animate our Faith, enliven our Hope, and extend our Charity; will deter us from Sin, and encourage us in Duty.

SINCE therefore this is the true Principle of Christian Obedience, the only Foundation, on which the whole Superstructure of Religion can rise with a proper Strength and Beauty, let us labour to form in our Minds such just Apprehensions of the Deity, as may possess our Souls with this Reverence towards him.

Such

Such as are our Conceptions of God, such will be our Affection towards him; and such as is the Affection of the Heart, such will be the Service and Obedience we shall pay him. Let us therefore take Care neither to affront his Majesty by want of Reverence, nor dishonour his Goodness by a servile Dread of his Power. Both are Defects equally destructive of true Religion; the one tending to extinguish it, by inclining the Mind to a Contempt of God; the other to corrupt it by Superstition. As therefore the Reflection on his Goodness should reconcile us with Delight to the Duties he enjoins; so must we remember that we are to serve him with fear; and, even in those Acts of our Worship, which principally engage the Mind in contemplating the Wonders of his Love, not forget the Honour due to his Majesty, but even rejoice unto him with Reverence; and while we approach him with the Confidence of Sons, humble ourselves before him with the Resignation of Creatures, and the Contrition of Sinners. And,

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LASTLY,

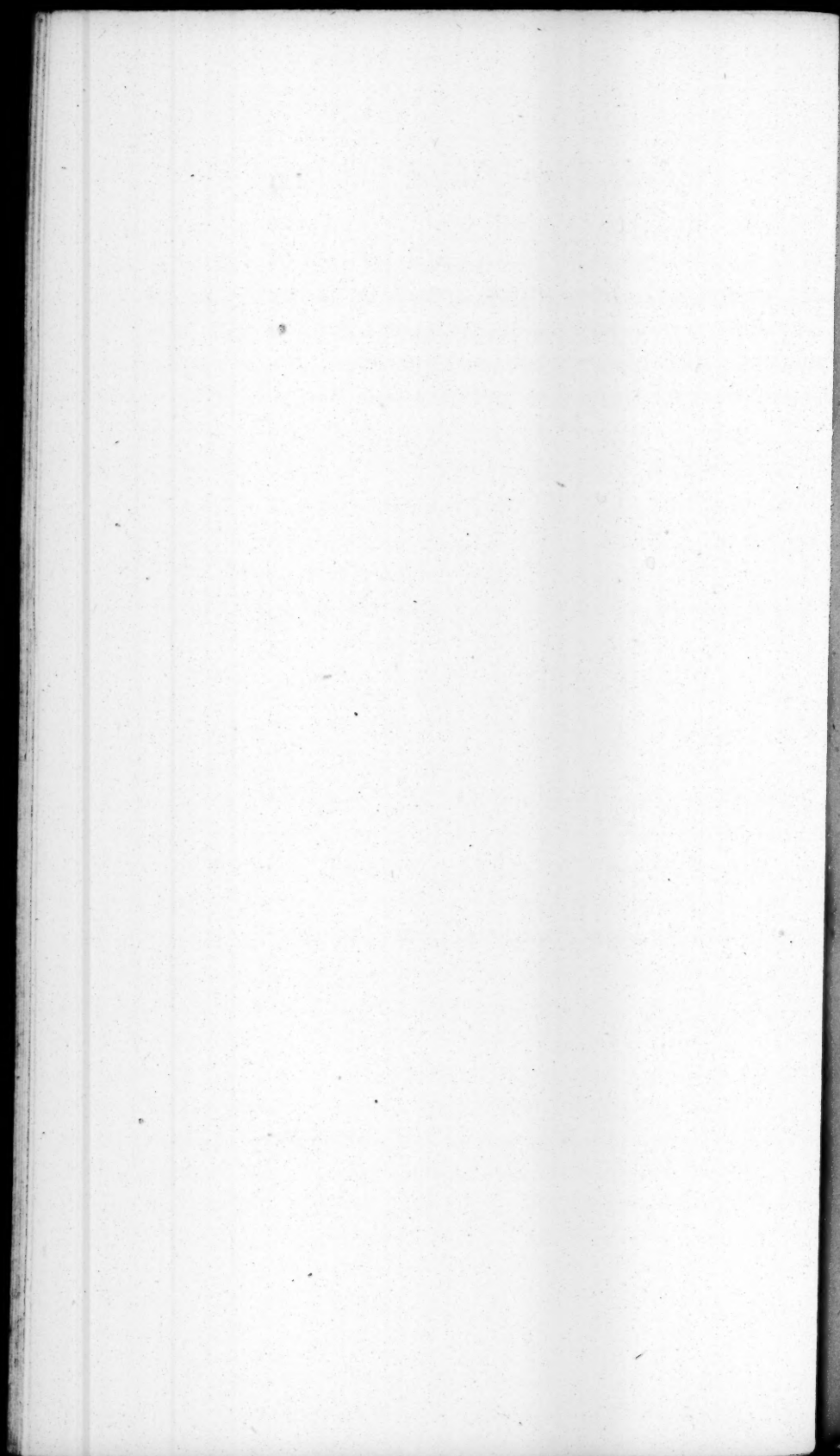
18 *The Nature and Influence*

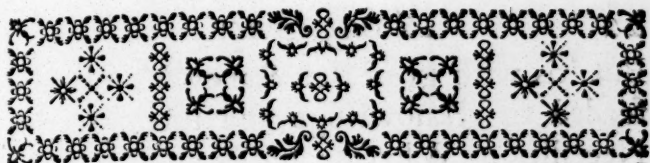
LASTLY, Let it not discourage any of us that our Conversion from a State of Sin to God, is attended with terrible Apprehensions of his Severity and Power, since (as I observed) this is not that slavish Dread which destroys Religion, but the Beginning of Wisdom; an Impression of Divine Grace on the Soul, which, duly cultivated, will end in Confidence in the Mercy, and Pleasure in the Service of God. The Divine Nature will gradually appear more amiable to us, and even our present Fears will improve our Affection: The Mercy of his Pardon will endear him to our Gratitude, and as we have much forgiven, we shall love much.

IN the present State of our Infirmary, the Soul, I am afraid, can rarely arrive to that just Temperament of Affection, with which Man in his Innocence adored his Maker. Our imperfect Conceptions of the Deity, and the frequent Failings and Offences to which the best of us are conscious, will debase the Honour we pay him, with some Alloys of a servile Mixture. The proper and adequate Reverence due from the Soul to God, is perhaps reserved
for

for the Perfection of that State when we shall see him as he is in the full Beauty of his Goodness, no longer armed with the Terrors of our Judge, no longer offended with our Transgressions, but appeased, reconciled, and united to us through *Christ*.

LET it be our Care in the mean Time so to fear him here, that we may behold him without Dread and Astonishment hereafter. That when we shall be called to the awful Tribunal of our Judge; when the Sinner shall desire the Mountains to fall on him, and the Hills to cover him from the Terrors of his Presence, we may be able to approach the Throne of his Majesty with the Confidence of Sons, and be received among the Redeemed of the Lord into that eternal State of Happiness, where all our Fears and Labours shall cease, where everlasting Love shall be our Employment, and everlasting Peace our Reward.





S E R M O N II.

A Sufficiency with regard to Mens Stations in Life adjusted and recommended.



PROV. xxx. 8, 9.

*Give me neither Poverty nor Riches;
feed me with Food convenient for
me: Lest I be full, and deny thee,
and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest
I be poor, and steal, and take the
Name of my God in vain.*

 A N, says Eliphaz to Job, is
born unto Trouble, even as the
Sparks fly upwards. Some Mix-
ture of Uneasiness attends us
in every Situation and Period of Life.

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But

But 'tis with great Reluctancy Man is persuaded to acknowledge and submit to this Necessity: What he misses at Home, he imagines may be found Abroad; what is wanting To-day, he still hopes To-morrow will supply. Restless and impatient to try every Scheme and Overture of present Happiness he hunts a Phantom he can never overtake; and instead of redressing the Evil he first complained of, he only adds it to the Toil of a fruitless Pursuit. The Sorrows he creates to himself are the heaviest Part of his Burthen, and his acquired far exceeds his natural Misery. The only effectual Remedy to both, is what Religion prescribes; to defer our Expectations of perfect Happiness to another Life; to consider the present, as a State of unavoidable Imperfection; and to regulate our Desires of the Things of this World, by their Tendency to promote or disserve our Interests in another. While we are in the Body, indeed, that Part of us will require a Share in our Concern. To be careful for a Provision of all Necessaries for ourselves and those who depend on us, is a bounden Duty.

To

adjusted and recommended. 23

To request such a Measure of the Conveniencies of Life, as we apprehend to be agreeable to our Station, the Example before us asserts to be not only lawful, but commendable. Nay, an Advancement of our Station, and Improvement of our present Circumstances may be innocently desired and endeavoured by us, provided the Motives are just and virtuous, and the Event be submitted with a due Resignation to Providence. But still our principal Care must be for the one Thing necessary, and all our temporal Desires and Pursuits must be governed by that View. And the Wisdom and Goodness of God has so ordered it, that those Proportions of the good Things of this Life, which are most consistent with the Interests of the Soul, are also most conducive to our present Felicity. The Request of *Agur* in my Text is formed upon this View, and recommends a Proportion to our Choice and Prayers, the best adapted to promote present Happiness, and freest from those Temptations which may prejudice our future. *Give me* (says he) *neither Poverty*

nor Riches, &c. You will be pleased to observe with me,

I. THE Import of his Wish: And,

II. THE Force of those Reasons here suggested for making it.

I. POVERTY and Riches are relative Terms, and the Idea of them varies as they are applied to Persons of different Condition, Education, Birth, or Figure of Life. The Order of human Society cannot be preserved, nor the Services requisite to the Support of it be supplied, without a Distinction of Stations, and a long Subordination of Offices. There must be in a House Vessels of Dishonour, as well as of Honour; and the one are as necessary in their Use as the other. There must be in the Body a Variety of Members; and unless the Offices proper to the meaner and less comely Parts be discharged, the superior and more honourable will be disordered. And the Analogy holds with great Exactness in public Communities. Some Members must preside and direct, and others serve and obey: And a Disparity between these

these in the outward Condition, Figure, and Ornaments of Life, is necessary to keep the several Orders in a mutual Dependence on each other; to give the Superiors that Authority, and incline the Inferiors to that Submission their several Posts require. Hence therefore it must follow, that those Degrees of Fortune which give Fulness and Affluence to one Station, may be Want and Penury in another; bear no Proportion to the Demands attending it, and disable the Man placed in it, from discharging the Duties it requires from him. And consequently, this Wish of *Agur* cannot be understood to propose one certain Size and Measure of Fortune, as the proper Standard of all Men's Desires, but in a Sense accommodated to the various Ranks, Conditions, and Characters of Men; and as advising each to request of God-such a Measure of temporal Supplies, as may answer the proper Ends and Exigencies of his Station. That he may neither be distressed with the Want of such Things, as are fit and necessary to one in his Position of Life; nor, on the other Hand, be loaded with such an Abundance, as far exceeds the Demands

mands of it. The former State is to him real Poverty, attended with all the Inconveniencies, and exposed to the Temptations of Want; the latter a real Burden; like *Saul's Armour* to *David*, to one of greater Stature it might perhaps be of excellent Service, but to him 'tis not only without Use or Defence, but a heavy Incumbrance, rendering him less active and serviceable in his Post, and less secure in his Person than he would be without it.

In this relative Sense then I understand the Poverty and Riches, which the wise Writer here prays to be removed from him.

THERE is indeed such a State as absolute Poverty, when a Man is destitute, not only of the Conveniencies, but even of the simple Necessaries of Life; is disabled from acquiring them by any Service or Labour, and depends entirely on the Compassion of others for his Support. But when I assign relative Poverty as the proper Subject of this negative Wish, I cannot be understood to exclude this absolute Poverty: For he who petitions God to preserve him from the Want of those things,

adjusted and recommended. 27

Things, which are convenient to his Station, more eminently deprecates these Extremities. And therefore to restrain the Petition to this absolute Poverty, is without Reason, and must very much contract the Example it proposes to us: For few will under this Supposition think themselves concerned to offer it, neither can such a Restraint consist with the Scope and Coherence of the Text. For if the Poverty here meant be absolute Poverty, then the opposite Branch (Riches) must be absolute too. Now I think it is scarce possible to form an Idea of absolute Riches, because we can hardly conceive any Degree of Riches, but what might be agreeable to some Station of Life or other. If therefore the one be relative to the Stations of Men, the other must be so too: And to this Sense the positive Part of the Wish determines us. *Feed me with Food convenient for me*, i. e. with such (both for Plenty and Choice) as is suitable to the Number of our Dependants, and the Station of Life we are appointed to fill: Not merely what is in the strictest Sense necessary to subsist Life, or answer the Demands

mands of Nature ; but such a Portion as may become the Rank and Character we sustain ; support us comfortably in our Station, and enable us to maintain such Works of Beneficence as that requires from us. All this is implied in the proper Notion of Convenience. And though it is our Duty to submit with Patience and Content to more scanty Allotments, yet unless we exclude temporal Blessings from being the Subject of human Petitions, thus much we may reasonably and lawfully ask of God.

THIS Petition has indeed been sometimes explained in another View, which I before hinted, *viz.* as requesting a Middle Station of Life, within Reach of those Conveniencies which the lower Orders of Mankind must necessarily want, and yet without Embarrassment of Greatness. But though this is probably a Situation of the greatest Ease and Tranquility of any in human Life, yet this is by no Means fit to be the Subject of all Mens Petitions to God : Because, as I observed, Society cannot subsist without a Diversity of Stations and Offices ; and if God should grant every

adjusted and recommended. 29

every one this Request of a middle Station, he would defeat the very Scheme of Happiness they proposed in it; and they would find themselves distressed in the Want of those Services, which can only be supplied by a Variety of Orders, both above and below the Condition they desired. To accommodate this Request therefore to general Use and Imitation, it is requisite to understand it in the Sense I have assigned: Not as directing Mens Wishes to any one fixed Point, or determinate Standard of Fortune, but to a Measure fitted and adjusted to the Condition of each. The Medium intended is not an absolute, but a respective Medium: The Proportion recommended to all is the same; but the Things to be desired in this Proportion, will vary both in Kind and Measure, according to Mens different Stations, and even to the different Periods and Incidents of Life. In this View the Request is suited to all Characters, Orders, and Distinctions of Men, from the highest to the lowest, and is a proper Comment on that comprehensive Petition enjoined us in our
daily

daily Devotions, *Give us this Day our daily Bread.*

How necessary is it to remind Men of this Proportion in their Desires, will appear if we observe how little it is regarded by them. Poverty indeed in all it's Degrees Men are easily persuaded to deprecate from themselves; in this Part of the negative Wish, every one is ready to concur with *Agur*; but it is with much Difficulty they are induced to join in the other. No Measure or Degree of Riches is thought too much; and if Providence should indulge Men in giving as long as they would ask, how few would interpose, and say to him, *Hold now thine Hand, it is enough.* But in Truth both Extremes above or below the Proportion of our Character, are equally dangerous to our Virtue and Happiness; and it is hard to determine which is most uneligible. Considerations arising from our temporal Interests might convince us of this Truth; I might enlarge on the Vexation and Disquiet, the Perils and Fears attending both Poverty and Riches, and observe that all the Felicity this Life admits of, is to be found in that adjusted
Mean,

adjusted and recommended. 31

Mean, that convenient Proportion here recommended to our Choice ; but the Reasons suggested in my Text are sufficient, and more Proper to be insisted on in this Place, as they regard our spiritual Concerns, and argue with us from Motives purely Religious.

A DISTINCT Consideration of the Force of them, is what I

II. PROPOSED.

THE Danger apprehended from Poverty is set before us in these Words ; *Left I be poor, and steal, and take the Name of my God in vain, i, e,* Left I be tempted to supply my Wants by Fraud or Violence, by Theft or Robbery, by Lying or Perjury : This last Article may either mean false Affeверations to facilitate the Commission of the former Crimes, or to elude their Discovery when committed, or those more flagrant Methods of unrighteous Gain, false Accusation, and false Witness : Crimes they are all, which no Degree of Poverty can excuse before God. We ought to know how to *want*, as well as how to *abound* ; to bear our Cross with
Patience,

Patience, and hold fast our Integrity, tho' every thing else be taken from us. But the Temptation to these Crimes must be acknowledg'd very strong, in a State of Distress. When a Man finds himself sinking below the Authority and Conveniencies of his Station; afflicted with the Sense of present Wants, and the Fears of greater; it requires a peculiar Measure of Grace and Firmness of Mind to stand the Shock, to be content to reduce all his Appetites, and descend into a lower Rank of Life, and submit to the Scorn and Neglect that usually attends such a Change. If in such Circumstances as these a convenient Supply offers itself either to be seiz'd by Force, or gain'd by Fraud and Treachery; Human Nature will plead hard to be reliev'd from it's present Burden, and persuade us to hearken to the inviting Overture. A Crowd of importunate Passions surround the Man, and will not suffer him to attend to the Remonstrances of Justice, or the Precepts of Religion. In the Parable of the wasteful Steward in the Gospel, we have a lively Image of the Force and Process of this Temptation, and the natural Reasonings

Reasonings of our Corruption under it. His Lord had declared he would take from him the Stewardship ; in Consequence of which Change he foresaw he must fall from a State of Ease and Honour to Indigence and Shame. This he immediately determines, that he could not submit to those Methods of Life, by which the Condition he must be reduced to, was usually supported : *Dig he could not, and to Beg he was ashamed.* What then was his next Recourse ? Why he was to make up his Accounts with his Lord, and by an easy undiscoverable Cheat he could provide against the impending Distress. And how readily does he resolve ? *This will I do.* He does not so much as hesitate upon the Falshood and Injustice of the Action, but applauds himself in the happy Thought, and sets presently about the Execution of it.

WE are assured by many glorious Examples in the Annals of our Religion, that every one in the like Circumstances of Distress will not act and argue thus ; but thus will every one be tempted to act. The Representation of our Lord is certain-

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ly Natural in all it's Parts : In such a State such Temptations will arise, and will more frequently be supplied with, than refused ; and therefore it concerns the most secure of his Strength, to pray to God not to lead him into this Temptation, not to expose him to an Enemy, by whom there is so much danger of his being overcome.

INSTANCES indeed may occur to us in the World, of Injustice, Knavery, and Oppression ; to which there appears no Inducement from the outward Circumstances of the Actors ; and therefore it may seem that this Temptation is not so peculiar to Poverty, as has been suggested. But when these cases are examined, it will be found that tho' there is not a real, yet there is an imaginary Poverty. Men are dissatisfy'd with their Station, discontented with the present, or too apprehensive for the future, and create to themselves all the Uneasiness of Want. They fancy themselves poor, and under this Persuasion feel all the Disquiet of real Poverty. They are equally impatient of their Condition, equally tempted with the Wages of Unrighteousness,

adjusted and recommended. 35

ness, as if they were indeed poor; and therefore these Instances rather confirm, than oppose the Supposition in the Text.

BUT I go on to observe also the Dangers apprehended from the other Extreme. *Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?* A very ungrateful Return indeed to the Author and Giver of all we enjoy, but such as an over-flowing Plenty too much inclines Men to make. While our Fortunes exceed not the Measure of real Convenience, and are adapted to the Exigences of our Station, we perceive the Hand of Providence in our gradual and successive Supplies; the various Accidents of Life are in our View, which may defeat our Labours, and in a short time reduce us to a Condition of Distress. We find ourselves obliged to go on in an honest Care and Industry in our Callings, and are convinced by daily Observation, that 'tis to the Blessing of God we owe every Success, and to his Protection our Defence from the Calamities, to which we are exposed. These Convictions must preserve in us a lively and constant Sense of our Dependance on him, engage our Praises

for the Favours we receive, and our Prayers for the Continuance of his Blessings to us: Our Devotion and our Industry keep pace with each other, and our Circumstances help to improve our Religion. But Riches multiplied beyond the proportion of our Character, and the Wants appendant to it, naturally dispose Men to forget God. They are apt in such Circumstances to think themselves secure and independent, out of the Reach of Providence, and no longer concern'd to solicit his Favour. Like the rich Fool in the Gospel, they applaud themselves in their Treasures; they have much Goods laid up for many Years, are sufficient to their own Happiness, and have no farther Occasion for God's Assistance. And 'tis well if they do not disown their Obligation for his past Favours, ascribe their Acquisitions to their own Skill and Management, and deny him even the return of their Praise. This Apprehension Moses very passionately represents to the *Israelites*. † *Beware*, said he, *lest, when thou hast eaten and art full, and when thy Herds and thy Flocks multiply, and thy Silver and thy Gold is multiply'd,*

† Deut. viii. 12, 13, 17.

adjusted and recommended. 37

and all that thou hast is multiply'd, Then thy heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, and thou say in thine Heart, My Power and the Might of my Hand hath gotten me this Wealth.

Thus does a superfluous Abundance tempt us to forget God, when 'tis hoarded in our Treasures, or consider'd as a safe independent Provision laid up for many Years. And if we take the other Choice, and give Wings to our Riches, and in the Language of the World resolve to enjoy our Fortunes, the Danger is rather greater. For what are the Enjoyments usually propos'd in this Choice, but the irregular Pleasures of Vice, the Gratification either of our Lusts or our Vanity? Charity indeed, and Works of Munificence are the proper Discharge of such over-proportioned Acquisitions, and the only virtuous Enjoyment of them: By the Exercise of these Virtues, we may relieve ourselves, while we relieve our Neighbour; sanctify our own Portion; and double the Pleasures we receive by a Reflection on those we give. But how few comparatively are the Instances of this wise Application? In how much greater proportion

are those who consider such Abundance, only as enlarging their Command of sensual Pleasure, who have nothing to say to their Soul on these Occasions, but *Eat and drink, and take thine Ease* : Indulge every Passion to Satiety, and let nothing be wanting that Appetite calls for, or Wealth can purchase. And how naturally does a Man stupify'd and immersed in vitious Pleasures forget God? 'Tis indeed with Pain and Regret that he must remember Him, reflect on an Almighty Being, whose Laws he breaks, and whose Vengeance he hourly provokes. Every Thought on God is like the Hand-writing on the Wall to the *Assyrian* Prince ; it chills the Gayety of his Spirits, and awakens Terrors, which he cannot bear ; renders all his Fruitions tasteless and insipid, and mingles Gall and Wormwood with his Pleasures. Before he can relish the Life he has chosen, and be indeed an Epicure, he must silence these interrupting Fears ; either drown them by Intemperance, or harden himself to a Defiance of them : Neither can he find any Satisfaction in his Pursuits or Enjoyments, 'till he arrives at that confirmed
State

adjusted and recommended. 39

State of Irreligion described by the *Psalmist*,
that he cares not for God, neither is God in
all his Thoughts.

AND if both Poverty and Riches, in that relative Sense I have explain'd them, are thus dangerous to our Virtue and Religion; the proper Subject of our Petitions to God, with regard to Temporals, must be the State between these, that medium of Convenience proportion'd to the several Conditions of Life, which the Example in my Text recommends to our Choice and our Prayers.

It is impossible for any general Directions precisely to fit and adjust this Measure of Convenience to the various Cases and Exigences of Men. Particular Applications must be left to Christian Prudence, under the Guidance of God's Holy Spirit, who knows our Necessities before we ask, and our Ignorance in asking. Perfect Content indeed in the present, and perfect Resignation to Providence for the future, seem to offer an Expedient that does all at once. But when we consider, that these Duties are consistent with desiring of God what we apprehend convenient for us; nay, that an Advancement of our

Station, and an Improvement of our Circumstances are within the Liberties indulged to our Desires; the Difficulty will appear to be rather placed in another Light, than taken away: For it still remains to be determined by Prudence, what Measure of Convenience or Improvement we should ask. The wise Supplicant in my Text, we may presume, was both contented with his present Situation, and tho' he prayed for the Condition he thought most desirable, yet left the Event to God, and was prepared to submit to his Will, tho' either of the Extremes should be his Portion; Yet this Disposition neither prevented his making the Request before us, nor ascertain'd the Measure he proposed to himself in it, nor removed his Apprehension from the States, which he prays to be removed from him; They still appeared to him States of Danger, exposed to many Temptations naturally attending them. These Virtues therefore, though they will do much, and are of excellent Use both for our Direction and Security, some prudential Rules it is requisite to take with them in Practice and Application. And some few, I beg leave
to

adjusted and recommended. 41

to suggest, which may in some Measure assist our Choice, or at least guard us against the Dangers of a contrary Event.

1. IF we would avoid the Dangers and Temptations of Poverty, it very much concerns us, not to over-rate the Conveniencies of our Station, and in estimating the Proportion fit for us, to fix it rather too low than too high ; for our Desires will be proportioned to our Wants, real or imaginary, and our Temptations to our Desires. If we imagine ourselves intitled to any Thing we have not, we shall be uneasy in the Want of it, and that Uneasiness will expose us to all the evil Persuasions of Poverty. He who can content himself with a little, will probably have enough, and be at Rest ; But he who makes much necessary, will want much ; and wearied with the Difficulty of the Attainment, will incline to hearken after any Expedient, that offers to shorten his Way to it,

2. I WOULD propose it as a great Security to our Virtue from all Temptations on this Side, to use ourselves sometimes to
live

live within the Restraints of a lower Condition, than that we are placed in: I mean not that we should sink our Figure out of Covetousness, and deny ourselves or our Dependants the proper Conveniencies of our Station, only that we may lay up a superfluous Heap of Treasure; but that by a voluntary Self-denial, we should sometimes inure ourselves to want the Grati- fications in our Power. Our Condition in this World is mutable and uncertain, alterable by a thousand Accidents which we can neither foresee, nor prevent. Now if this Change happens to a Man, who has always indulged himself in the full Enjoyment of his Station, the Burden will lie heavy, and he will difficultly be persuaded to think any Methods unjust, that offer to remove it. But he who has previously inured himself to those Restraints, which such a Change renders necessary, can chearfully reconcile himself to them: He is reduced only to what has been often his Choice before. The Tempter has no Appetite to apply to, but what he has already learned to govern: And he who could want those Conveniencies, when
he

he might easily have enjoy'd them with Innocence, will easily reject all sinful Methods of acquiring them.

3. To guard against the Temptations from the other Extreme, no better Advice can be given, than that of the *Psalmist*, *If Riches increase, set not thine Heart upon them.* For Riches may be increas'd to a good Man: Nay, 'tis a natural and providential Effect of his Virtues to increase them. But then he will remember from whom he receiv'd them, for what Purposes they are given, and to whom he is accountable for the Management of them. If these Considerations are present to our Minds, we shall neither forget God, ourselves, nor our Neighbour; and be Proof against the Temptations of Pride and Pleasure.

AFTER all, no Condition of Life is necessarily Sinful, or necessarily Virtuous. We may pass with Innocence, both thro' Want, and thro' Abundance; and he whose Fortune is best adjusted to his Station, may be Wicked and Vicious: But still, he has much less Temptation
to

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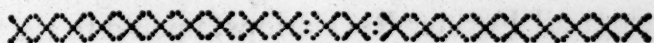
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to be so, than he who is placed in either of the Extremes. And tho' we are bound to submit to whatever Circumstances God shall allot us, and diligently endeavour to acquit ourselves with Duty and Fidelity in them, yet Christian Prudence will advise us to request a Situation least exposed. The Honour may, perhaps, be greater of standing in a Post of Danger; but when the Stake is so great, and the Miscarriage so irretrievable, a wise Man would chuse to act where the Hazard is less. And when he considers the manifold Temptations both of Poverty and Riches, how vehemently they assault the weakest Parts of our Nature, and how fatally it will effect his Happiness to be overcome by them, he will join with *Agur* in petitioning God for the safer Portion of a moderate adjusted Convenience; that his Temptations may be such as he is more able to bear; and that he *may so pass thro' things Temporal, that he finally lose not the things Eternal.*



S E R M O N III.

The Greatness of the Salvation offer'd in the Gospel, and the extreme danger of Neglecting it.



HEB. ii. 3. the former part.

*How shall we escape, if we neglect
so great Salvation?*

ST. Paul, in these Words, makes an immediate Address to the Jews, and pleads with them for a distinguished Regard to the Gospel, from the Dignity of the Person, by whom it was proposed. God (he observes)
had

had at sundry Times and in divers Manners spoken unto the Fathers by the Prophets; and the Law had been deliver'd to them by the Ministry of Angels, Messengers who might justly demand their Attention and Obedience. But the Messenger of this last Dispensation had a Character far superior to these, was the Son of God himself, the Heir and Author of all things, whom the Angels themselves adored and obeyed. With equal Advantage was the Message he brought distinguish'd from all Former Revelations, open'd to the Faith of Men, in a clear and distinct Prospect of eternal Salvation, which had been but very obscurely and partially figured to them in the Shadows of the Law. The Apostle then calls upon them, to reflect that if they who disregarded the former Messages of God, felt the Resentments of his Displeasure; much heavier Effects of Divine Vengeance must attend the Refusal or Neglect of this last Overture of Grace and Salvation. The Argument, as it appeals to the past Experience of the Jews, had a peculiar Force in Application to them; but it arises from Principles which
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give it a much wider Extent, and sets the Terrors of the Lord before every obstinate *Infidel*, and every negligent *Christian*: It reminds the One of the just Condemnation that awaits him for rejecting the Gospel, and the other for not complying with the Terms and Duties of it; forfeiting so great Salvation, when put in his Power; and rendering ineffectual all the gracious Care of Providence, for his Attaining of it. As I speak to *Christians*, I shall chiefly consider the Words before us in this latter View: The Import of them may appear to us more distinctly in these Propositions:

I. THAT God has by the Gospel made so effectual Provision for our Happiness, that nothing but our own Neglect can render us miserable.

II. SINCE God has taken so great Care for our Salvation, it is most reasonable that Men should be careful to perform their Part of this Work, and not neglect it themselves.

III. THAT

III. THAT they who do neglect it, will have no Excuse for the Crime, but must expect the severest Resentments of Divine Justice.

IF our Attention be duly engaged to these Reflections, they cannot, I think, fail of a powerful Influence on our Lives.

AND, I. God has by the Gospel made so effectual Provision for our Happiness, that nothing but our own Neglect can render us Miserable. This must appear if we but transiently observe,

1. How great, how glorious a Felicity, how adequate to the Desires of a reasonable Nature, is revealed to our Hopes in the Gospel.

2. WHAT Care and Sollicitude he has expressed for our Attainment of it.

3. UPON how gracious Terms of Duty it is promised to us.

I. MAN, under the Disadvantages of a weak and fallen Nature, was unable even to form an Idea of Happiness, worthy his reasonable

reasonable Ambition. That he was design'd for Happiness, he justly concluded from the Goodness of that Power from whom he derived his Being, and from the strong and restless Desire, by which he was carried to the Pursuit of it. This Happiness, it was presently resolved by all who look'd farther than the common Pursuits of vulgar Minds, must be some one uniform End, proportioned in general to the Capacities of human Nature, attainable by every Man, independent on the Accidents of Fortune, and not confined to any certain Station or Circumstances of Life. But in the various Projects of Happiness devised by human Reason, there still appear'd Inconsistencies not to be reconciled. The Patrons of the several Schemes observed and exposed the Defects of one another, which they could much easier do than defend their own. In the mean time none was proposed, on which the Mind could rest with an entire Satisfaction; none that appear'd certainly attainable, or of Value enough to reward the Labour of the Pursuit. Neither indeed was it possible there should be, while Men could not

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with any sure Confidence carry their Hopes beyond this Region of Chance and Vanity, where nothing was stable, nothing was equal; nothing could be offer'd to Day, but what To-morrow might deprive us of; and consequently nothing commensurate to the Desires of human Nature, on which it could fix as its ultimate End, without being carried on with any farther Desire. In this State, before the Light of the Gospel, Mankind travell'd on like People in the Dark, avoiding as well as they could what offended them in their Passage, but without any certain Prospect of the End of their Journey, or of the way that led to it. The wisest were distracted with Doubts and Uncertainties, while the Generality wander'd without any Rule, following just where their present Passions happened to lead them. But what unassisted Reason could not discover, that God has set clearly before us in the Revelation of the Gospel: A Felicity equal to our most enlarg'd Desires, a State of immortal and unchangeable Glory, with him in Heaven, assured to our Faith by a solemn Covenant, for the Performance of which we have the Security

the Gospel Salvation. 51

curity of a divine Promise. This is an End, which, at first View, appears worthy our utmost Contention to obtain, and in Comparifon with which every other Prospect becomes mean, trifling, and contemptible: A Felicity adapted to every Rank and Order of Men, independent on the various Accidents of this Life; fuch in fhort as the Refearches of Human Wifdom fought for, but were not able to difcover.

THE great Care of God for our Salvation muft farther appear to us, in the Concern he has expreffed for our Attainment of it. The Meflenger of thefe glad Tidings, by whom this Covenant of Mercy was propofed and ratified with us, was no other than the eternal Son of his Bofom, the Ray of his Glory, and the exprefs Image of his Perfon. And when we confider what his Divine Perfon did and fuffered in this ftupendous Negotiation, how he was bruifed for our Iniquities, and wounded for our Tranfgreffions, and paid down his own Blood the Price of our Salvation, we cannot furely want Ar-

guments to convince us of the Concern of God for our Attainment of it.

3. BUT the gracious Terms of this Covenant are still a farther Assurance of this Conclusion. The Performances required on our Part, are no other than what natural Reason has endeavoured to recommend, even in the most severe and difficult Instances of Duty : By this Covenant the tenderest Provision is made for our Failings and Infirmities ; he who falls may again rise to Grace ; the contrite Sinner is restored to pardon, and through Faith in *Christ*, our Repentance is intitled to Salvation.

AND to this we must add the great Assistances vouchsafed us in the Support, Comfort, and Direction of the Holy Spirit ; Assistances always attending us upon the easy Condition of our Prayers, and by which the most burdensome Duty will be rendered light and easy.

IF we miscarry under so many Advantages, the Fault must be in ourselves : God has done all that the most merciful Creator could do, for the Salvation of a free and rational Creature ; all that could
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engage us the Pursuit, or assist us in the Attainment of it : And it must be owing wholly to our own Neglect, if we come short of it. Since therefore God has taken so much Care for our Salvation, and done so much for our Attainment of it, it must,

II. APPEAR most reasonable that we should be careful to perform our Part of the Work, and not be negligent in so great a Concern ourselves.

NAY, but, say some, God has taken so effectual Care for us, that we need not take any for ourselves : He has done so much, that nothing remains for us to do. If we are of the Number of his Elect, we cannot miscarry ; both the End and the Means are secured to us, without any Pains or Labour for our own. *Christ* has paid the Price of our Salvation : His Righteousness will be imputed to us : The Reward is not of him that runneth, or of him that worketh, but a mere Act of Grace, and Favour. And on the other side, if we are not of the Elect of God, all our La-

bour and Application will be ineffectual, we may run, yet not obtain.

Now it is acknowledged these Premisses are true, when rightly understood ; but when they are so, this Conclusion will not follow from them. God has predestinated all whom he has chosen, to eternal Salvation. This is undoubtedly true ; neither is it possible to conceive infinite Prescience, without affirming this Doctrine. For since all the Works and Acts of God, all that he should do to all Eternity, were known and present unto him from all Eternity ; these Acts of his Mercy or Justice towards Men, must also be known, and consequently predestined or predetermined by him from all Eternity. But in the Idea or Conception of infinite Prescience, it is also included that God should from all Eternity foreknow our Works, as well as his own ; and it is utterly inconceivable, that when these Works of ours were present before him, he should make his Decrees concerning us without any Regard to them. So that the ultimate Allotment of God to Men, is really a Consequence of their own voluntary Choice, in doing
Good

Good or Evil : But this Choice of Men, and the Allotments of divine Justice consequent to it, being foreknown and foreseen by the Divine Prescience from all Eternity, the final Event of every Man's Conduct is properly said to be predestined or predetermined by God. From the Doctrine of Predestination therefore thus truly understood, it is evident, that no Consequence can be drawn, which can give the least Encouragement to Remissness in Duty : For our Salvation still depends upon our own Conduct. Life and Death are set before us, and in our Election ; we shall receive according to what we have done, whether it be good or whether it be evil ; and the final Event will not be one Jot less the Consequence of our own Choice and Actions, for God's having from all Eternity foreseen and determined what that Event shall be.

Neither can he who is wanting in his own Applications infer any Security to himself from the Doctrine of Justification. The Righteousness and Merits of *Christ* shall, through Faith in him, be imputed to us. This is certainly a true and most

comfortable Assertion of the Gospel: But the proper Import of it is only this; that since our best Services will, through the Corruption of our Nature, be attended with great Imperfections: Since in many Things we shall all offend; God by the Mercies of the Gospel-Covenant has promised, that he will accept the Satisfaction of *Christ* as an Atonement for these Failings, impute his perfect Obedience to us, to fill up and supply what is wanting in ours, and through his Merits and Intercession intitle our sincere Repentance to Pardon and Salvation. And whoever seriously reflects on his own Imperfections, how impossible it is for Flesh and Blood to pay an exact Obedience to the Laws of God, how often even the best of us fail of performing what even natural Conscience affirms to be our Duty, cannot but acknowledge the Compassion of God in these merciful Overtures; how inevitably we had been lost without them, and exposed to Death, the Wages of every Sin.

WHEN we have done the best we are able, our Obedience will still be imperfect, and

and our Salvation will be owing to the imputed Merits of *Christ*, supplying and atoning for this Imperfection; but still it is our strict and bounden Duty to do as much as we are able, and not sin in Confidence of Grace abounding to us. The Merits of *Christ* will make up the unavoidable Deficiencies of our Service, will atone for our Imperfection, will prevail for Pardon to our sincere Repentance; but will afford no Comfort or Advantage to the presumptuous unconverted Sinner: And consequently this Doctrine of Justification cannot be pleaded in Abatement of our Endeavours. We shall be tried and judged according to our Works; neither will it avail us to cry *Lord, Lord*, if we are found among the Workers of Iniquity.

THE exceeding great Tendernefs and Concern of God for our Salvation, which appears in these gracious Terms and Means of it, is so far from an Argument for Remissness in us, that it ought to excite our utmost Care and Sollicitude, to perform the Part left to our own Endeavours. No Being, not even God himself, can be so immediately; so intimately concerned for
our

our Happiness, as we ourselves are. Since therefore God has done so much for our Salvation, and appeared so solicitous for the Accomplishment of that great Work, what amazing Stupidity is it for Men to be negligent of it themselves? to sit down lazy and unactive, when so inestimable a Treasure is brought even to their Doors, and offered upon such Terms, as even the weakest Abilities may comply with?

BUT how indifferent soever Man may be to eternal Happiness, yet surely to eternal Misery none can be indifferent; And if other Arguments are heard without Impression, yet at least this used by the Apostle in my Text, the inevitable Destruction which awaits our Neglect, must prevail for our Attention. Every Faculty and Power of our Soul must be awakened, when we are called upon to consider how unpardonable the Refusal of so much Grace must render us, how impossible it will be for us to escape, if we neglect so great Salvation. Or,

III. THAT they who do neglect it will have no Excuse for their Crime, but must expect

expect the severest Resentments of the Divine Justice. It is observable, that the Apostle here asserts this as a clear indisputable Conclusion, which could admit of no Question. He appeals to common Sense and Reason, to judge of the Equity of it. For what Excuse can be framed or devised for the Man who slights the Overture of so much Mercy, or neglects the Means prescribed for the Attainment of it? Ignorance he cannot plead, to whom the Gospel has been proposed, and of such the Apostle here speaks: The Measures of Duty and the Event of our Actions, are there so clearly and distinctly taught, that 'tis impossible for him who attends, to be ignorant of them. *Christ* has made so full a Provision for the Instruction of all, who are within the Society of his Church, by the Appointment of a Ministry, attending on this very Thing, and the continual Administration of those Ordinances committed to them, that if any one can, under these Advantages, be ignorant of the Terms of Salvation his Ignorance itself must be a Crime without Excuse.

WILL

WILL it be said, that these Terms are hard and rigorous, beyond the Capacities of our Nature to perform? Neither can this be pretended. For to do as much as we are able, and to repent of our Transgressions, is the Sum of what is required from us; Conditions adapted even to the meanest Abilities: Especially since the Assistance of Divine Grace is always present to those who ask it, and duly attend those Ordinances, which God has instituted as Means of it. The Direction then is sufficiently clear, and the Duty required by it adjusted to the Powers of our Nature; neither Ignorance nor Inability can be pretended; and what Plea can we offer to Divine Justice to prevent Condemnation? But though the Justice of this Decision cannot but be acknowledged, whenever we impartially reflect on it, yet manifest it is, that there are some Delusions or other of Power sufficient to blind the Eyes of Men that they cannot perceive it, or to harden their Hearts that they cannot attend to it.

AND

AND, 1. It is pretended by the Libertine and Infidel, that he wants Evidence to convince him of the Truth of this Gospel we preach to him, and therefore he must be excused if he regards not the Salvation offer'd by it. But not to enter far into the Detail of this Question here, I would only ask him whether it be not possible for God to reveal his Will to Mankind. This, if he owns a God, and is not lost to all Use of his Reason, he cannot deny : And let him but consider the manifold Imperfections of human Reason, as diversify'd by the various Capacities, Ignorance, Inattentions, and Passions of Men, and the Distraction that must arise from every Man's being left without Guide or Rule to collect his own Scheme of Duty ; and he cannot but confess, that 'tis a thing the most desirable to Man, and most agreeable to the Goodness of God, that he should send forth his Light and his Truth, by a special Revelation of his Will direct, and by the Authority of his Command enjoin, a Rule of Duty to them. Let us then ask him, what Proofs and Evidences he could require of such Declarations coming from God ; whether

ther 'tis possible to conceive or imagine greater and more determinate than those alledg'd in support of the Christian Revelation; and lastly, Whether, supposing a Divine Revelation to have been made, and such Facts as are alledg'd in Proof of it, to have been performed above one Thousand six Hundred Years ago, it is possible for the Evidences of them, to have been conveyed down to us at this Distance, with greater Clearness, than the Proofs of the Christian Revelation are conveyed to us; and whether every Objection that now is, or can be made to it, might not have been urged against it by sceptical Men, supposing it to have come originally from God? If then we have all the Evidence of the Truth of it, that we could have, supposing it to have been true, we have all the Evidence that the Nature of the Thing admits, and consequently all that any reasonable Man ought to insist on; and therefore no Man can be excused before God by the Pretence of wanting Evidence, for refusing to believe and obey the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*.

BUT

the Gospel Salvation. 63

BUT, 2. We find even among them who profess to believe the Truth, and hope in the Promises of the Gospel, too many living in a stupid or presumptuous Neglect of those Means, which are necessary to the Attainment of them. Now many are the Illusions by which the Enemy endeavours to cheat Men into Security, and defeat their Title to Salvation; but those by which he seems most generally to prevail, are either persuading them to a Confidence in some partial Works of Obedience, or else to put off the Care of their Salvation to some future and better Opportunities of attending to it. How little the former of these Pretensions will avail us before God, must be obvious to every one who remembers that Decision of the Apostle *, that he who *keeps the whole Law* except *one Point*, and presumptuously offends in that, will incur the Penalty of the whole Law.

AND as to the latter, the Folly of leaving so important a Concern as our Salvation to the Hazard of future Provisions, of deferring the Care of it even for a Day, has been often observed and inculcated to you.

* James ii. 10.

Let

Let us only reflect how weak, how trifling an Excuse it will be, when our Judge shall reproach us with neglecting that great Salvation which his Mercy offered us, with being deaf to all the Calls of his Grace, and preferring the transient Interests or Pleasures of this Life to that of Glory he had revealed to us, to say, we intended some time or other to be wiser, and reform.

Upon the whole, to those who have never heard of the Gospel, it may be presumed God will be more favourable in Judgment; the imperfect Direction they are under, without any certain Rule of Duty, or any sure Prospect of Reward upon the Performance even of what Reason approved, will be some Mitigation of their Mistakes and Impieties. But for a wicked Christian, there remains nothing but a dreadful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation from the Vengeance of God. He sins in the clearest Light, against Knowledge and Conviction, against a solemn Vow and Contract with God; with a full View of the Consequences of his Actions; eternal Happiness is set distinctly before him on the one Hand, and eternal Misery on the other;

other ; he is daily call'd upon by the Word, by the Ministers of the Gospel, by the inward Suggestions of the Holy Spirit to his Soul and Conscience, to attend to these Prospects, and mind the Things that belong to his Peace. And his Gratitude is under the strongest Obligations to Duty, from those amazing Instances of Divine Mercy, made known to him in the Mystery of his Redemption. For Sins committed with so many Aggravations of Guilt the Furnace of Wrath will be seven times hotter, and burn with a distinguish'd Fury. For if he who offends against the Light of Nature, be left without Excuse to the Justice of God, if he who despises the Law of Moses, died without Mercy ; of how much forer Punishment shall he be thought worthy, who tramples under Foot the Blood of the Son of God, and does Despite to the Spirit of Grace ? *More tolerable will it be in the Day of Judgment for Tyre and Sidon, more tolerable even for Sodom and Gomorrah,* than for those who have heard, and known the gracious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and neglected the great Salvation offer'd by it. Let us therefore remember the dread-

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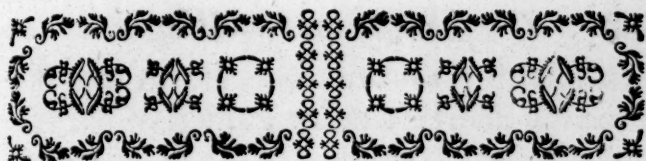
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ful Judgment that hangs over us, from which there is no escaping but by acting up to the great Obligations of Obedience we are under: Let us immediately set about the great Work of making *our Calling and Election sure**, lest we be hardened thro' the *Deceitfulness of Sin†*; lest it be in vain for us that a Law is come into the World; lest a Promise of Life being made us, we should not only fail of entering in, but the gracious Overture itself should be objected in Reproach and Aggravation of our Sin: And all the infinite Mercies of the Gospel should bring no other Fruit to us, but only that thereby we might receive the greater Damnation.

* 2 Pet. i. 10.

† Heb. iii. 13.





S E R M O N IV.

A Conformity to this World inconsistent with our Duty and Happiness.



ROM. xii. 2. former Part.

Be not conformed to this World.

WHEN we reflect on the Force and Variety of those Arguments which persuade us to Religion; the Importance of the Rewards which attend our Obedience, and the Terror of those Penalties which are threaten'd to our Neglect; the Frequency with which they are inculcated, and the Warmth and Affection

68 *Conformity to the World*

wherewith they are propos'd to us ; that God has address'd every Passion of our Nature, apply'd Remedies to every Weakness, warn'd us of every Enemy, and guarded us against every external Impression that might divert us from his Service ; that our Duty in all the great Lines of it is clear and obvious, the Extent of it understood, the Obligation acknowledg'd, and the Wisdom of complying with it freely confess'd : When (I say) we reflect on all this affectionate Care of Providence for our Happiness, with what wonder must we observe the little Effect it has on Men ? What Charm, what Magick is it, which can overrule the Force of all these Motives, and engage us to act against our own Convictions ? The Scripture has directed us to refer these Miscarriages in our Christian Warfare, especially to the Power and Impression of three Enemies, the *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*. Against the former of these the Apostle endeavours to arm his Converts in the Words before us, as an Enemy of the greatest Danger to our Virtue and Happiness, whose Conquest over us is inconsistent with that Purity and Tem-

destructive of our Happiness. 69

Temperance he recommended, that holy and reasonable Service we owe to God. By the *World*, we are sometimes taught to understand the Things of this World; that Variety of Pleasures and Interests which are apt to insinuate into our Passions, and steal away our Affections from God. Sometimes (as in the Place before us) we are to understand the Men of this World, with whose Sollicitations we are so apt to comply, and to whose dissolute Manners and Customs we are too ill inclined to conform.

I SHALL hope to prevail on your Obedience to this Precept of the Apostle, by representing the great and particular Danger we are exposed to from this Temptation; which will abundantly appear if we consider,

I. THE great Proneness of our Nature to comply with this Temptation.

II. THE great Evil which will attend such Compliance. And having from these two Considerations represented our Danger, I shall endeavour,

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III. To

III. To suggest some Rules to our Conduct, which may preserve us from it. And,

I. LET us reflect on the great Prone-ness of our Nature, &c.

EXAMPLE is a Motive of a very prevailing Force on the Actions of Men. In the former part of our Lives, the Rules and Measures of our Practice are almost wholly taken from the Conduct of such Persons as fall within our Observation. We have indeed Precepts of Duty given us by our Instructors; but these we imagine are best explained by the Actions of those who have learn'd them before us. We are apt to argue that these Men have had longer Opportunities of Information, and are equally concern'd in the Consequences of Obedience with ourselves: And if their Duty be consistent with the Liberties we observe in their Practice, it is a foolish Superstition in us to refuse ourselves the same Indulgences. And the same Authority that the Actions of a Man have with us in our Childhood, the same in every Period of Life
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destructive of our Happiness. 71

has the Practice of all whom we regard as our Superiors in Knowledge, Figure, or Station in the World. We persuade ourselves they have some secret Reasons for what we see them do, which however thro' Want of their Information and Capacity may be unknown to us; yet whatever they are, they must be equally conclusive for us, as they are for them. Thus we implicitly follow in the Track in which they lead us, and comfort ourselves with this poor Reflection, that we shall fare as well as those that go before us: And what the Example of our Equals wants of Authority, is abundantly supplied in the Insinuations of Friendship, and the repeated Influences of a constant Conversation. We are naturally inclined to think favourably of those we love, and our Affection to the Person insensibly engages us to approve his Actions; and then what we approve in our Friend, we can hardly be induced to think criminal in ourselves. And if besides our Proneness to imitate those we love and converse with, we observe the Address and Assiduity they will use to corrupt us; that it is a natural Effect of the

72 *Conformity to the World.*

Pride of Man to labour to infuse his Sentiments, and recommend his Practice to others; that this is a Compliment our Superiors will demand to their Authority, and our Equals to their Friendship; we have still a farther Argument to convince us of the Danger of this Temptation. 'Tis indeed scarce possible for a good-natur'd Man to refuse a Compliance with the Solicitations of his Company, to stand out against the Raillery of his Familiars, and the continual Reproaches of Affectation and Singularity. We are fond of pleasing and endearing ourselves to those we esteem; and since nothing more affectionately recommends one Man to another, than a Similitude of Manners and Disposition, we are irresistibly led into the same Inclinations and Aversions with them.

IN general, we cannot but observe, and in too many Instances lament the Power of Fashion and popular Custom: With what Tyranny it governs the Sentiments and Actions of Men; makes that Reputable in one Age, which was a Vice in another; and reverses even the Distinctions of Good and Evil: Like brute Beasts we travel with
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destructive of our Happiness. 73

the Herd, and are never so solicitous for the Rightness of the Way, as for the Number or Figure of our Company. With how just a Concern therefore does the Apostle caution us against an Enemy, so apt to prevail upon our Weakness? A Temptation, to which every Period of our Age, every State and Condition of our Life is exposed: A Temptation of still the greater Danger, because it deceives us under the false Similitude of Virtue, is covered with the specious Names of good Nature and good Manners; recommends itself with all the Charms of Friendship, and is encouraged by the Esteem and Applause of all about us. But the Consideration which should especially quicken our Obedience to this Admonition of the Apostle, is,

II. THE great Evil that will attend our Conformity to the World. Were they only some slight and trivial Indiscretions, to which the Example or Persuasions of the World exposed us, it might perhaps not much concern our Religion, nor affect any important part of our Happiness, whether
we

74 *Conformity to the World.*

we regarded them or not. But alas ! the Interest endangered is no less than our Title to Heaven, and the Favour of our Creator : The Actions to which the World solicits our Compliance, are those very Sins which forfeit our eternal Expectations, and treasure up Wrath and Vengeance against us from the Justice of God. The far greater Part of the Examples that occur to us, are so many Encouragements to Vice and Disobedience. *The whole World* (saith St. John*) *lieth in Wickedness*. And 'twere happy for us if this Complaint of the Apostle could be confined to the Age in which he wrote, and were applicable only to the Heathen World. The Purity of our Religion, the Excellence of its Laws, and the Weight of its Sanctions might indeed encourage us to hope better Things from a Christian World; and perhaps in the Days of the Apostle, when all who professed themselves Disciples of *Christ*, were Converts of Conscience, this severe Censure might with more Reason be restrain'd to the unbelieving Part of Mankind; but when Christianity came to be taken up by many

* 1 John v. 19.

destructive of our Happiness. 75

many only as the fashionable Religion of their Country, and for the sake of those civil Encouragements which attended their Profession, the Complaint was too visibly applicable to the Lives even of Christians, to excuse them any longer from the Extent of it. Alas ! the Enemy of our Happiness has his Servants and Votaries, even among those who are called by the Name of the Son of God. He is styled in Scripture the Prince of this World ; and the Conduct of too great a Number will always be influenced by his Authority, and obey his Direction. Let us with all the Charity that can consist with a just Observation, stand still and reflect upon what we daily see practised in the World ; and can we believe if an Apostle of *Christ* appeared in our Streets, he would retract his Caution, and command us to be conformed to the World ? Do we find so much Piety, Virtue, and Religion, in the publick Example of the Age, as may secure our Imitation, and encourage us to rely on the general Practice for the Measures of our Duty ? Shall we not rather be tempted to cry out with the *Psalmist*, *They are all*
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76 *Conformity to the World.*

gone out of the Way, they are altogether become abominable, there is none that doth good ?* Let us not flatter ourselves that our Innocence is without danger of Contagion from a World, where we behold every Instance of Lewdness and Intemperance, Prophaneness and Irreligion, not only committed, but own'd, defended, and gloried in. The World indeed was never without Examples of Vice and Immorality ; wicked Men there always were, and always will be. But the public State of Religion is somewhat less in Danger of Corruption, while the Sinner acknowledges the Obligations of his Duty, is ashamed of his Irregularities, professes a Reverence for the Laws of God, and promises still to reform, and live agreeably to them. He offends indeed, but 'tis with a Modesty like the Son in the Gospel, who own'd the Authority of the Command, and promised his Father to go, tho' he went not. But the Case is far otherwise, and the Danger of the Example much greater, when an open Party is form'd against Religion ; when Vice has the public Encouragement of Applause, and Prophaneness be-

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* Psalm xiv. 1.

destructive of our Happiness. 77

comes establish'd as a Fashion ; when Men shall no longer affect to hide and conceal their Crimes, but make the most daring Impieties a Motive of their Vanity ; when the Principles of Obedience, and the Authority that requires it, are questioned, and the very Articles of our Creed disputed, and ridiculed : when Atheism, Deism, and Heresy are confess'd, applauded, and supported ; when the Altar, the Service, and the Ministers of God are treated with Scorn, and the whole Oeconomy of the Gospel exposed to Contempt as Fable and Imposture. This is not Disobedience, but Rebellion ; 'tis disclaiming the Sovereignty of *Christ*, and renouncing all Allegiance to his Authority, and declaring in Terms, we *will not have this Man to rule over us*. And yet these are the Crimes, this the Pattern, which the World proposes to our Imitation: These it recommends to us as Arguments of more refin'd Sense, and a superior Understanding : To these we are solicited by numerous Examples in every Rank and Order of Men ; by the Authority of the Great, and the Intimacies of our Equals ; by the Arguments of the Subtil, and the Rail-
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78 *Conformity to the World*

eries of the Prophane; by the Reproaches of Enemies, and the Persuasion of Friends: While Christian Faith, Piety, and Devotion are traduced and ridiculed as morose un-conversable Qualities, the Effect of Pride or Folly, of Knavery or Superstition. And can the Ministers of the Gospel too frequently remind Men of so imminent a Danger, or too earnestly discourage a Conformity to so corrupt and dissolute a World? For be we assured, it is not a Trifle that we hazard, but the greatest Interest of our Nature, the eternal Salvation of our Souls, the End for which we were born, and the Reason for which we came into the World.

LET me therefore,

III. RECOMMEND some Rules to your Conduct, which may preserve you from the Impressions of so importunate, so dangerous a Temptation. And here,

I. THE most effectual Preservative of our Virtue, is to avoid, as far as is possible, the Conversation of wicked Men. If indeed we would only decline evil Company, we must renounce human Society, and (as
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destructive of our Happiness. 79

the Apostle * says) *go out of the World.* But 'tis in our Power to confine our Friendships and Intimacies to Men of Virtue and Religion. The Righteous are not so fail'd from the Earth, but we may find good Men enough for the Support and Entertainments of Society : Men whose Conversation will weaken the Influence of vicious Examples, instruct our Ignorance, relieve our Modesty, and give us Courage and Assurance in the Duties of our Profession. But because the Business and Affairs of Life will sometimes unavoidably engage us in the Conversation of wicked Men, let us,

2. ARM ourselves with an habitual Resolution never to cummunicate with them in their Vices, not to suffer any Friendship or Relation, any Example or Authority to prevail on us to desert the Truth of *Christ*, or act any thing in Contradiction to our Duty to God. And,

3. WE shall be very much assisted in forming and executing this Resolution, if we inure ourselves to express our Abhorrence and Aversion to Vice, and with a decent Freedom reprove every Action
that

* 1. Cor. v. 10.

80 *Conformity to the World.*

that affronts the Majesty of God, and encourages Men to think slightly of the Duties of Religion: By this we shall confirm both our own and others Virtue. The Libertine himself will treat us with Reverence and Respect, and instead of attempting to corrupt our Integrity, will conceal and disguise his own Vices, and be afraid of incurring so venerable a Censure. By this Conduct we may hope to retrieve the public Credit of Religion, reform the Example of the Age, and lessen the Danger we complain of. And that we may never want Courage to attempt and persevere in so glorious a Work, let us above all things possess our Souls with awful Apprehensions of the Majesty and Sovereignty of God, with an habitual Reverence for his Laws and Zeal for his Honour.

LET us remember that we are born his Servants and Subjects, and whenever we are tempted by the Persuasion, the Example, or Commands of Men to do or approve any thing contrary to the Duties we are enjoin'd, let us reflect that we have a prior and superior Obligation to the Commands of *Christ*, and the Laws prescribed

destructive of our Happiness. 81

scribed to us by our Creator ; and that the Pattern recommended to our Imitation is, not the mixt and imperfect Virtues, even of the best Men, but the Purity of our Father which is in Heaven, and the Example of him *who knew no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth.* And let us then reflect on the infinite Power and Justice of this Almighty Being, his Ability to reward our Service, and revenge our Contempt of his Authority. Let us consider the vast Disproportion between the worst Inconveniencies that can attend our Incompliance with Men, and the eternal Displeasure of an offended God.

How trifling an Apprehension is the Shame of being laugh'd at by Fools, when compared with that Confusion of Face, that everlasting Shame and Astonishment, which shall overwhelm the Sinner, when he shall appear before the Tribunal of *Christ*, and hear every Sin of his Life produced in the Presence of God and his Angels ? And how despicable are the Threats and Reproaches of a Creature, frail, mortal, and impotent as ourselves, when compared with

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82 *Conformity to the World*

the Wrath of an Almighty Judge, whose Power extends to eternal Inflictions, who can cast both Body and Soul into Hell?

AND let us then reflect, that this great, this holy, this terrible Being, is present to all our Actions, see, every treacherous Inclination of our heart to desert his Service, and treasures up against the Day of his Wrath the secret Cowardice which deters us from asserting his Cause, which prevails on us to compliment the Vices of the Great, to applaud the Libertine, and laugh with the Prophane. And, lastly, to these just and awful Apprehensions of the Deity, let us add our humble and constant Prayers to the Throne of his Grace, that he would lead and support us with his Spirit thro' this Vale of Temptation; give Strength and Courage to our Weakness, and enable us so to pass the Waves of this troublesome World, that we may come to the Land of everlasting Life; be received into the blest Society of those Servants of God, who have preserved their Integrity amidst all the Difficulties which the Malice or Flattery of Men could

destructive of our Happiness. 83

could add to their Duty; who have fought their Way thro' all the various Sollicitations of the World; thro' evil Report and good Report; thro' Shame and Applause, *and are entered into the Joy of their Lord.*



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of the history of our country.
could add to their duty who have
taught their way through the various
difficulties of the world; the civil
war and good history; the 23rd
and 24th, and are entered into the 25th
of the book.

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S E R M O N V.

An inordinate Love for this World
incompatible with the present and
future Happiness of Man.



I JOHN ii. 15. former Part.

*Love not the World, neither the
Things that are in the World.*

 H E Desire of Happiness being
the governing Principle of our
Nature, the Spring which gives
the first Movement and Direc-
tion to all our Faculties, and all our Pas-
sions; we might reasonably hope to find

86 *Love of this World*

the Warmth of our Affections, and the Intention of our Pursuits, proportioned to the Ability of the Object to gratify this Desire: That whatever offered us the greatest, the most important, the most durable Satisfaction, should engage our Affections before any other Being, less furnished to supply our Wants, and satisfy our Thirst of Happiness: And consequently, that God, the Author of our Being, the supreme and only substantial Good of Man, who alone can answer all our Longings, and fill every Vacuity of our Soul, should entirely possess our Heart, should be the chief, the governing Object of our Desire. But, alas! every Creature that he has made, is suffered to be his Rival, and is too often preferred before him.

THE World has the unhappy Advantage of pre-engaging our Passions: of furnishing us with the first Sentiments of Pleasure, at a time when we have not Reflexion enough to look beyond the Instrument to the Hand whose Direction it obeys. And when we arrive at a Maturity of Reason, it is with great Difficulty we are persuaded to part with the Delusion,
and

inconsistent with our Happiness. 87

and renounce those Objects, in the Pursuit of which we have been used to place our Felicity.

WE may perhaps grow weary of the Trifles that have sometimes diverted us; but the World has a successive Variety of Entertainments to amuse our Passions, and provoke our Appetites, in every Period and Station of our Life; and it is with great Reluctancy we are convinced of their Vanity, by any other Argument than our own Experience. But since God has assured us, that these are Paths which can never lead to Happiness; and to all the Arguments that could prevail on a rational Creature, has added the Authority of a solemn Prohibition; give me leave to persuade your Compliance with both, and discourage your Love of the World, by shewing,

I. THAT the Things of the World cannot make us happy even in this Life.

II. THAT our Love of them is inconsistent with our Expectations in a better.

FOR nothing can recommend itself to

our Love on any other Account, but either as it promotes our present, or is a Means to assure to us a future Happiness.

I. THEN the Things of the World cannot make us happy, even in this Life.

THAT we are designed for Happiness, we may justly infer, from the infinite Goodness of our Creator; and that we are designed for a more exalted Happiness, than can be derived from the Things of this Life, we may also infer, from their vast Disproportion to the Desires and Capacities of our Soul. 'Tis a Maxim in Philosophy, that Nature made nothing in vain; and consequently since we find in our Nature a strong irresistable Desire of a constant, permanent, and infinite Good; there is certainly a Happiness commensurate to this Appetite of the Soul. Nothing indeed could reflect more severely on the Goodness of God, than to imagine he had given us the perpetual Torment of a Desire, he never intended we should gratify: And since the Things of this World, with whatever Eagerness they engage our Pursuit, leave us still empty and
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inconsistent with our Happiness. 89

unsatisfied with their Fruition; our own Disappointment ought to convince us, that they never were designed for the proper Felicity of our Nature. *Solomon*, who undertook this Argument with all the Advantages of an inspired Wisdom and a large Experience, after a distinct consideration of every Project of worldly Happiness, has at last resolved all his Enquiries into this mortifying Conclusion, *that all is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.* And whoever, though with less Wisdom and less Experience than *Solomon*, shall attentively reflect on the Event of his own and other Men's Actions, will find himself daily obliged to acknowledge the Justice of his Inference, and confess all to be Disappointment and Delusion.

GOD has given us Appetites to the Things of this World, to engage us to the Use of them as far as they are necessary to the Support of the Body, and the Convenience of our present Stations: But to convince us that he never intended them for the supreme Object of our Love, our Appetite is extinguished with the Satisfaction, and is succeeded by Loathing and Satiety.

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In vain do we try to remedy the Defects of our present Acquisition, by changing the Scene, and varying the Object; for the same Dissatisfaction pursues us through the whole Circle of created Goods. Our last Attainment proves as insipid as our former: The Charms that engaged us, expire, and we soon grow indifferent to what we pursued before with the greatest Fondness and Application.

AND what should farther convince us, that the Things of this World were not designed for the proper Object of human Affections, the Satisfactions they furnish, are not only disproportioned to our Desires and Capacities, but such as are infinitely below the Dignity of our Nature; and such, in which when we have indulged ourselves to Satiety, the Brutes that perish will have a greater Share than we. The Fowls of the Air, and the Beasts of the Field, who are supplied with every Thing agreeable to their State, without any Toil or Labour of their own, unmolested by Hopes or Fears, free from the Sollicitude of Expectation, and an Anguish of Disappointment (if Happiness
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inconsistent with our Happiness. 91
consisted only in the Things of this World) would in many Instances have a much fairer Portion than Man; and we should have very little Cause to value ourselves upon the boasted Distinctions of Reason and Reflection. We should, methinks, then be ashamed to rival Beings so much our Inferiors, and dishonour the Excellencies of our Nature by so degrading a Competition.

THE next Consideration that should disengage our Fondness from the World, and convince us that our most successful Pursuits of Temporal Goods can never make us happy, is, that they are uncertain in their Foundation, fading, transient, and corruptible in their Nature; depend upon a Thousand Causes and Accidents, which are not in our own Power; and, as the Apostle * says, perish even while we are using them. How should it check and mortify our Desire, to behold the Image of Death and Corruption in every Object that is round us; To see every fleeting Moment rob us of some Beloved of our Soul, something we have been used to reckon among the Ingredients of our Happiness;

* Col. ii. 22.

pinefs; and at the fame Time to feel this Body, the Subject to all thefe Gratifications, and the Seat of our imagined Happinefs, hourly failing and decaying and haftening on to a Diffolution? Duration is a Circumftance fo effential to Happinefs, that if we conceived it poffible for the Joys of Heaven itfelf to pafs from us in an Infant, we fhould find ourfelves not much concerned for the Attainment of them; and therefore 'tis with Regret that our Corruption is perfuaded to reflect on the Inftability of temporal Goods: We are willing to confider them as fixed and permanent, and to fay with the rich Fool in the Gofpel*, *Eat and Drink, my Soul, and take thine Eafe, thou haft much Goods laid up for many Years.* But when with Care and Toil we have raifed and furnifhed this imaginary Treasure of Happinefs, we find at laft that the Materials of the Structure are frail and perifhing, and the Foundation itfelf is laid in the Sand; fupported only by a feeble mortal Body, which the next Hour, the next Moment may deftroy. All the gay Scene is difperfed, and vanifhes
like

* Luke xii. 19.

inconsistent with our Happiness. 93

like a Dream, or Phantom, at that terrible Voice: *Thou Fool, this Night shall thy Soul be required of thee, and then whose shall all these Things be?*

BUT the Goods of this World are not only thus transient and precarious in their Duration, but all our Enjoyments of them so mixed and alloyed with Misery, that even their most uninterrupted Possession is far from a perfect Felicity. I am afraid the happiest among Men, upon a fair Estimate, have stronger and more frequent Sensations of Pain than Pleasure. Nay, those very Objects that most affect us with Delight, are generally in some Respect or other, Occasions of Uneasiness to us: Our Interests interfere with our Pleasures, and our Pleasure with our Interests. Even the Friend, in whose Assistance and Affection we place so much of our Happiness, will do some Things which will discompose our Passions, and provoke our Resentments. And the Affluence, the Honours, the Dignities we are so fond of, will be attended with some Circumstances of Trouble and Disquiet, something that will alloy

loy the Pleasure, and embitter the Satisfaction we propose from them. Nay, so much are our Pains over-proportioned to our Pleasures, that an inspired * Writer has ventured on this general Inference, from a distant Review of this Life, *That Man is naturally born to Misery, even as the Sparks fly upwards.* Now Pain is so uneasy a Sentiment, that a very little of it is enough to spoil the Relish of our most fortunate Attainments, and corrupt every Enjoyment of Life. And the Effect God intends this Variety of ungrateful and afflictive Sentiments should have on us, is to reclaim our Affections from this Valley of Tears, and direct us to look farther for the Region of our Happiness.

BUT supposing our present Enjoyments as pure, as permanent, and in all Respects as valuable as our Folly is apt to represent them, yet they can be no reasonable Motive of our Affection to any, but that Bounty from whom we receive them. God as he is the Author of our Nature and of all our Faculties and Capacities of Fruition, so 'tis by his Providence we are supplied

* Job v. 7.

plied with Objects agreeable to them. The Creatures are but Instruments in his Hand, by which he conveys grateful Sensations to us; and the returning our Acknowledgments to them is just the same Absurdity with theirs, who burnt Incense to the Drag, and sacrificed to the Net, which caught their Prey. 'Tis to God, and him only, our Share of temporal Felicity, and all that is pleasing or beneficial to us in the Enjoyment of the Creatures, is ultimately to be referred. Nay, 'tis an Assertion, supported by the least disputable Maxims of Philosophy, that God is (in a more immediate Manner than is generally imagined) the Author of every sensible Perception in us. For 'tis certain all Perception is and must be in the Soul. Now 'tis impossible to imagine any Powers in the Bodies around us, besides Figure and Motion; but it cannot be conceived how the Soul is capable of any Impression from these in their greatest Activity. Nothing appears capable of acting upon Spirit but Spirit: And therefore though God has annexed Pain to those external Impressions which are injurious to the Body, and Pleasure

sure to those that are beneficial to it, yet it is not the material Object which produces those Sensations in the Soul, but that eternal, omnipresent Spirit, in whom we live, and move, and have our Being : And consequently, 'tis to him only that our Love, our Devotion, and our Gratitude is due, even for all those agreeable Preceptions that engage us to the World.

BUT if the World has so little Title to our Affection, even for those temporal Satisfactions it furnishes us with, how much less will it appear to deserve our Inclinations, if we consider it,

II. WITH regard to our eternal Interests, and the Expectations of Futurity.

WHENEVER we attentively view the World in this Relation, we find Motives, not only for our Indifference, but even for our Aversion ; all the visionary Beauties or Glories of the Prospect, the Paint and Imagery that attracted our Senses, fade and disappear, and leave us disconsolate in the midst of a frightful Scene of Guilt, Temptations and Misery ; a Region, where every Path before us appears beset with
Snares

inconsistent with our Happiness. 97

Snares and Dangers, Ways, in which we must walk with Fear and Trembling, and where all our Care and Circumspection will be little enough to secure our Virtue, and prevent our Destruction: For this is the Image which Religion gives us of the World. Every Page of its Precepts represents it as a Place of the greatest Danger to our immortal Interests; a Place which we must pass through, not only with the Indifference of Strangers and Pilgrims, but with the Vigilance and Apprehension of those, who travel through the Country of an Enemy. We are perpetually reminded of the Treachery that lurks under all its Pleasures: We are required to abjure its Poms and Vanities in our Baptism, and to renounce its Friendship as Enmity with our God. He that *loveth the World* (says the Apostle of my Text*) *the Love of the Father is not in him.* They are two Masters, whose Service can never be reconciled: Every Compliance that we are persuaded to by one, is a Contradiction to the Commands of the other; and our Adherence to one will

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necessarily

* 1 John ii. 15.

necessarily involve us in a Desertion of the other.

THE Performances, to which God has annexed the Promises of Eternity, are just the reverse of all the Pursuits of Sense, and consist in restraining those Appetites, mortifying those Lusts, and renouncing those Pleasures, by which the World solicits our Affection. And agreeably our Lord has taught us to rejoice in Affliction, in Poverty and Disgraces; and to esteem the Reproaches of *Christ* greater Riches than all the Honours or Affluence of this World.

As Love is a Passion of the strongest Influence on the Soul, so God peculiarly requires the primary Devotion of the Heart to himself; it is a Flame we must consecrate wholly to his Altar, and it is Prophaneness and Sacrilege to rob him of it. He knows that wherever our Treasure is, there will our Heart be also. Whatever we propose as our supreme Happiness, to that will every Faculty and Power of our Nature, every Thought of our Soul, and every Action of our Lives be directed. But this is an Honour God has declared

inconsistent with our Happiness. 99

declared himself jealous of, and determined never to resign to another. He will not be content with the Refuse of our Affections, but must rule and govern in the Heart, and preside over all our Desires: And to deny him this Supremacy, is to dethrone the Deity, and give his Kingdom to another; a Crime, he has assured us, he will resent with the severest Inflictions of his Vengeance. *Those mine Enemies* (says he) *which would not that I should reign over them, bring them out and slay them before me**. So that allowing the Pleasures, the Honours, or Interests of this World all the Advantage they can have from present Perception; yet if they expose us to the Displeasure of God, and prejudice our eternal Expectations, we ought to reject them as the insidious Proposals of an Enemy, who for a Trifle in Hand would cheat us of an infinitely more valuable Reversion. Man, as an immortal Being, is, and, whenever he Reflects, must be concerned as well for the future and distant Consequences of his Actions, as for the present and more immediate Result

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* Luke ix. 27.

of them: And if he will act rationally, cannot admit any Competition between a mix'd, a fading, a momentary Satisfaction, and an everlasting Fruition of Happiness, as great as an obeyed God can give, and our spiritualized Capacities receive. Let us then attend to form just Ideas in our Minds, of the infinite Disparity between the Things of this World, and the Promises of a better. Let us divest the gay Phantom of temporal Happiness, of all that false Lustre and Ornament, in which the Pride, the Passions, and Folly of Men has dressed it up, and we shall then see how withered, how deformed a Carcase we with so much Zeal and Assiduity have courted, and for whose Enjoyment we have given up the only valuable Interest of our Nature, and sold our Birth-right to Heaven and Immortality. The melancholy Hour will come, when all those Charms, which now bewitch our Affections to the World, shall cease and be dissolved: *When the World and the Lusts thereof shall pass away**: When every Appetite and Capacity of Pleasure shall
expire,

* 1 John ii. 17.

inconsistent with our Happiness. 101

expire, and Pain and Disease succeed in their Place : when neither Pomp nor Retinue shall be able to divert the Great, nor shall the Rich be relieved by the Multitude of his Treasures. How, alas ! will he then despise the Titles and Quality, in which he gloried ; and with what Shame and Confusion will he reflect, in what Trifles he has placed his Happiness ; no longer to be amused by the Observance and Flatteries of his Attendants : while amidst all the Honours that are paid him, he feels nothing in himself but a poor, weak, dispirited Mortal, yielding to the Laws of Corruption ! And what is still the most afflictive Part of his Misery, he is now within View of another State, just entering into another World, where he has contracted no Friendships, made no Provision for his Reception : where those very Pursuits, in which he has placed his Happiness, will expose him to the Resentments of an Almighty Judge, and be avenged in eternal Inflictions. Let us then *set our Affections on Things above* ; let our Treasure and our Heart be in Heaven ; and let us regard the Things of this World with the

102 *Love of this World, &c.*

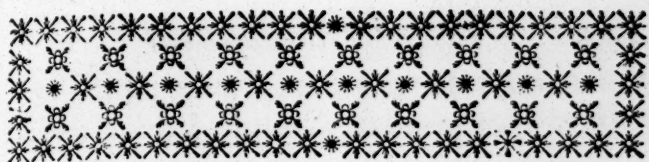
Indifference of a Guest, that tarrieth but a Day. Brethren (says the Apostle) *the Time is short; it remaineth therefore that they who weep, be as though they wept not; they that rejoyce, as though they rejoiced not; they that buy, as though they possessed not**. We should be easy and unconcerned at all the Accidents of the Way, and regard only the Event of the Journey. Above all, let us be earnest in our Prayers to God, that he would lead and conduct us by his Spirit through this barren and dry Land, this Region of Sin and Vanity, that we may so use this World, as not to abuse it; and so pass through Things temporal, that we finally lose not the Things eternal.

Which God grant, &c.

* 1 Cor. vii. 30.



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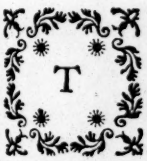
S E R M O N VI.

An Exemption from Falling not to
be expected in our present Mi-
litant State.



I COR. X. 12.

*Let him that thinketh he standeth,
take heed lest he fall.*

 **T**HE Number of those who are
hardened into a Contempt and
Defiance of Religion, is com-
paratively small, with respect
to those who perish through a false and de-
ceitful Confidence in their Expectations
from it. Some depend on Resolutions of
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future Repentance ; others on a punctilious Observance of some Divine Laws, which they hope will atone for the avowed habitual Transgression of the rest. And it is no Wonder if any Presumption which offers to soften the Terms of the Duty, or excuse the Labour and Sollicitude of Obedience, finds a Multitude ready to entertain it.

THE Delusion against which we are cautioned by the Apostle in the Words I have read, is of equal Danger with either of the former. For some reflecting with too much Satisfaction on their own Proficiencies, or presuming with too much Confidence on their Election by God, are apt to persuade themselves into a careless Security : They are exempted (they think) either by Perfection or Privilege, from all Possibility of miscarrying : They have passed all the Dangers and Difficulties of their Journey : The Way is now all smooth and safe, and therefore they may slacken their Pace, and remit their Attention, and go on without Fear of Mistake or Falling, and without any Apprehension of the Enemy.

BUT

BUT the Scriptures speak of the State of a Christian in this World, in a Language very different from this. It is there frequently compared to a Warfare, the most hazardous and difficult Condition of Life: And this Allusion has appeared so just, and to answer throughout in such exact Correspondencies, that the Character of Militant here on Earth, has obtained as the common Distinction of that Part of *Christ's* Church sojourning here in this World, from that happy Part of the Family at Rest from their Labours and Fears, and triumphant in Heaven. And when we reflect on the Subtilty, Strength, and Vigilance of the Enemy we are engaged to contend with, and the many Advantages which our Passions and Infirmities, and the various Temptations of the World give him against us, we cannot but apprehend this Warfare to be a State of great and continual Peril. We are indeed furnished with an Armour from Heaven, of Firmness sufficient to resist all his Impressions; but if we are remiss or negligent in the Use of it, if we suffer ourselves to be persuaded to lay by our Arms, and inter-
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mit our Guard, we may be surprized at an Hour when we are not aware, and the very Presumption of our Safety may be the occasion of our Ruin.

To excite our Vigilance, and arm us against this Danger, the wise Caution of the Apostle before us deserves our constant Attention, *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* From which Words I shall observe,

I. THIS Point of Doctrine arising from them, *viz.* That in our present Militant State we are not capable of such a Degree of Security, as may exempt us from all Apprehension of falling. I shall then,

II. INFORCE the Application of this Doctrine, by shewing what practical Inferences it ought to suggest to us.

I. FROM these Words I observe, first, this Point of Doctrine arises: That in our present Militant State we are not capable of such a Degree of Security, as may exempt us from all Apprehension of falling. Now by Falling is sometimes meant,

I. SUCH

1. SUCH Lapses and Miscarriages, to which all, even good Men, are subject; or,

2. A final, irrecoverable Falling into a State of Impenitence and Apostacy.

As to the first Kind of Falling, it is not, I think, disputed, but that all Men are in Danger of it. Every Man finds in the Examination of his own Life, and is ready enough to observe from other Mens, that in many Things we offend all. And if any Man shall be so vain as to pretend an absolute Exemption from Sin, the Holy Ghost reproves him in that Scripture *, *If we say we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us.* Nay, such are the Infirmities of our Nature, such the Struggle between the Flesh and the Spirit, that we are all continually subject, not only to those lesser Failings and Deviations from Duty, which are inseparable from our present State of Imperfection, but the many Examples of God's chosen and approved Servants, who have fallen into

* 1 John i. 8.

into great and grievous Sins, may convince us, that we are not secure even from these. For thus have the most eminent Instances of Human Virtue fallen; the Integrity of *David*, the Wisdom of *Solomon*, and the Zeal of *Peter*. Thus far then it will not, I presume, be denied, that we are all, even the best among us, while we continue in this Militant State, in Danger of falling: And therefore no Man can safely conclude, either from those Measures of Grace with which he has been favoured, or from his Proficiency under them, that he is exempt from it.

BUT with Regard to the second Kind of Falling, a final, irrecoverable Falling, it is contended that the Elect are secure from it; and therefore, if this Caution of the Apostle be meant of that falling, they are not concerned in it. Now, tho' this Scripture may be usefully understood and applied by us as a Caution to guard against those Lapses and Failings, to which our Infirmities daily expose us, and which 'tis our Duty to strive against to the utmost of our Power; and more especially to excite our Vigilance, lest we fall into any great
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and heinous Crime; yet 'tis evident that the Apostle in these Words intended principally, if not only, a final falling away into a State of Perdition. For in the preceding Part of this Chapter, he had recited many Examples of Sinners whom God had cut off, in and for their harden'd Impenitence, whose Fall was certainly final. And having declared that these Things happened to them for Examples, to be applied by us for our Admonition, he immediately infers, *Therefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall*, (i. e.) in all Construction, thus finally fall as they did. And in this Caution, I conceive, all, even the Elect themselves, in their present State, are concerned. It is confessed, that the Elect of God cannot finally fall, neither shall any pluck them out of his Hand: Their Names are written in Heaven in the Books of God, and shall be blotted out. But these Counsels of God are to us unsearchable; neither has he left us in Scripture any Marks or Signs, by which we may infallibly conclude ourselves in that happy Number, whom he has finally chosen. Herein then

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lies the Error which we would reprove: That Men have pretended to assign certain Characters and Evidences, by which all who are elected, may assuredly know themselves to be so, most of which resolve into a strong confident Persuasion that they are so, which they presume to call the justifying Faith of the Elect. A Doctrine indeed, which cannot but gain great Attention and Reverence to the Teachers of it from their Followers, who look upon them as Men trusted with the Secrets of Heaven, and who know the Impression of God's Seal: Who in truth by pretending to declare the Evidences of it, do in Effect assume a Power of fixing it on whom they please: A Degree of spiritual Authority, equal to, if not greater than that claimed by those in the Church of *Rome*, who have carried the Doctrine of Absolution to the greatest Extravagancy. But what Advantages soever the Teachers of this Doctrine may derive to themselves from it, 'tis to be feared their Disciples are, in Confidence of their Skill and Authority, often led into Conclusions from it of great Danger to their Souls; who are thereby persuaded

suaded to rely with too much Presumption on their Vigilance, and be less apprehensive of Sin than the Soldier of *Christ* ought to be.

BUT far otherwise the Scripture declares, that known unto God only are they that are his. He only knows the Heart, the Sincerity and Foundation of our Faith and Obedience, whether it will abide the Day of Trial, and endure unto the End, or not. It is not deny'd but God may by special Revelation communicate to any of his Servants, a certain Assurance of their Salvation, as he did to St. *Paul*, both concerning himself and others. He knew, as he tells us, that there was laid up for him a Crown, which he should receive in the great Day. And of some others he pronounces, that their Names were written in the Book of Life. But these must be confessed extraordinary Favours, such as no Man can without great Presumption expect. What we affirm is, that in the standing Revelation of Scripture, the ordinary Rule of our Judgment, and Measure of our Expectations, God has not given us any Marks and Criterions, by which
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in particular Applications we can assuredly determine who are finally elected, and who are not. All we can arrive to in this Life, is a stedfast Faith in the general Promises of the Gospel, and Hope in particular Applications of them to ourselves, or others. But Hope in its highest Assurance acknowledges a Possibility, and even some Degree of Fear of the contrary. And agreeably, we are all in general commanded, to *work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling* *. They who in Obedience to this Command of the Apostle wrought out their Salvation, were certainly elected to it; and yet we see they are here commanded to work with Fear and Trembling; far from any such Assurance as excluded a Possibility of miscarrying.

IN Sum, of our present State with Regard to God's Favour and our Title to his Promises, we are capable of some determinate Conclusions, because we here judge from a Comparison of our past and present Dispositions and Actions, with the Rule of God's Word. The Subjects of this Enquiry are something fix'd and certain; and

* Phil. ii. 12.

and if in this Examination of ourselves we find we do Righteousness, love and fear God, and walk in the Way of his Commandments, and are truly penitent for all Deviations from them, we may have a comfortable Assurance that we are of God, and thro' the Mediation of *Christ* look up to him with the Confidence of Sons; or in the Words of the Apostle, *may think we stand*. But what will be our Condition in the future Part of our Life; whether we shall draw back to Perdition, or hold on stedfast unto the End, we can conclude nothing with infallible Certainty. The utmost we can do is to hope in the Divine Promises, and pray earnestly to God to enable us to persevere; *not to lead us into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil* *: To go on patiently in every Work of the Lord, supporting our Resolutions with this general Assurance, that if our Lord when he comes shall find us so doing, our Labour shall not be in vain.

NOTWITHSTANDING therefore the Assertion be very true, that the Elect of God cannot finally fall; yet since we have no

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infallible

* Matth. vi. 13.

infallible Marks, by which, while we are in this Course of our Pilgrimage, we can conclude ourselves in that Number, it remains that none (not excepting the Elect themselves) are in this present State capable of such Assurance, as excludes all Apprehension of falling. And this the Words of my Text evidently imply. For what greater Assurance can any one have of his Condition, than to think he stands: They, whom the Apostle here addresses, who thought they stood; no doubt thought themselves of the Number of the Elect; at least whosoever thought himself one of the Elect, thought he stood; and yet every one without Exception who thought he stood, is here admonished to take heed lest he fall. The Terms are manifestly general, and not only inclusive, but even descriptive of the Elect, who could arrive at no greater Assurance in this Life than to think they stood. And if the Apostle imagined that every one who thought thus of himself, might know it impossible for him to fall, how vain was this caution to guard against it? Or if he intended this Direction only to those, who, whatever they appeared

appeared or thought of themselves at present, were not Elected, but Réprobates, to what purpose does he caution them to take heed lest they fall, who, notwithstanding all their Care, must and would fall?

BUT the Truth is, the Apostle, knowing that the Distinction of these Characters was undiscernible by Men in this Life, admonishes those who in Appearances stood at present, and had the most comfortable Assurances of God's Favour towards them, to be nevertheless apprehensive for the future; not to presume on their Security from Danger, but to keep a strict Guard against the Enemy, to proceed with the utmost Care and Circumspection in Duty, that they may hold fast the Beginning of their Confidence steadfast unto the End; the only Way to make their Calling and Election sure.

THE Doctrine arising from this Scripture thus established, I go on to observe,

II. IN the Application of it, what practical Inferences it out to suggest to us. And,

1. IF none in this Life, not even those who have the best Evidences of Grace, and the greatest Assurances of God's Favour, can conclude with Certainty what their Dispositions, and what their State towards God shall be hereafter, but are obliged to work on with Fear and Trembling; how vain and dangerous are all Doctrines and Presumptions which encourage Men to think their Work is already done, and, like the Fool in the Gospel, to say to their Soul, *Soul, take thine Ease**, thy future Prospects are all safe, and no Harm can happen unto thee?

THERE is indeed in the Mind of Man a strange Proneness to hearken to any Suggestions that offer to assure his Expectations, and put a present End to his Labours and Fears. Thus it was with the *Corinthians*: Many among them (as appears by the Context) rely'd on their Profession of Christianity, their being received into the Covenant of the Gospel, and having been Partakers of those Ordinances which were the Seals of it. But the Apostle labours with great Application to convince

* Luke xii. 19.

convince them of their Error. He reminds them of former Examples, and observes to them, that the Fathers were Partakers of the like Privileges under the *Mosaical Covenant*; *That they were all baptized in the Cloud, and in the Sea**: All eat of the same spiritual Bread, and drank of the same spiritual Cup, which were Types of the Christian Sacraments; yet all this availed them nothing, neither secured them from Sin nor from Punishment, but they fell into Impenitence, and perished under the Displeasure of God. And we cannot but observe the same and divers other Presumptions of Security prevailing still among Christians. Some, under the Doctrine I have before considered and reprov'd, relying on certain Marks and Signatures of their Election: Others, on their belonging to some particular Church or Sect of Christians. But all Confidence in these, and whatever other Privileges or Exemptions Men may fancy to themselves, the Apostle here discourages, and declares none to be secure from Danger of Falling: And, as the

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* 1 Cor. x. 2

Words may emphatically be understood, that the most confident are in the greatest Danger; that he who thinketh he stands, is by that very Presumption taken off from his Guard, and particularly concerned to take heed lest he fall.

THE first Inference then that arises hence, is, That we ought with the greatest Care to avoid and refuse all Doctrines taught by others, and suppress all Suggestions of our Minds which tend to create in us this dangerous Security; to look upon them as Snares and Artifices of the Devil, by which he would lay us asleep, that he may the more easily surprize us and take us captive at his Pleasure.

2. WE cannot but hence collect what Watchfulness and Affiduity, what Intention of Mind and Application of all our Faculties the State of our Christian Warfare requires from us. It is not enough for us to have attained such Measures of Virtue and Goodness, as may encourage us to a present Confidence towards God; but we must proceed in our Labour, and press still forward to the high Mark of our Calling. How justly soever we may hope or believe

believe we stand at present, yet if we stand still, we shall be in Danger of losing Ground, and falling back again. Our Adversary will not be idle, tho' we are; he watches every Turn of our Soul, and Incident of our Life; and if we remit our Activity, will take Advantage of our Indolence, sow his Tares while we sleep, dispose us at first by gentle Insinuations to hearken to his Overtures, 'till he gradually hardens us thro' the Deceitfulness of Sin.

AND let us quicken our Care and Vigilance against this Danger, to reflect, that if after a comfortable Progress in Duty we do fall away, all our past Labours shall profit us nothing; for thus God has assured us by the Prophet *Ezekiel*, *When the Righteous turneth away from his Righteousness, and committeth Iniquity; all his Righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned; in the Trespas that he hath trespassed, and in the Sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die**. Nay, his Crimes will be much aggravated by the Advantages of Light and Grace, under which they were committed, and his Recovery be rendered

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* Ezek. xviii. 24.

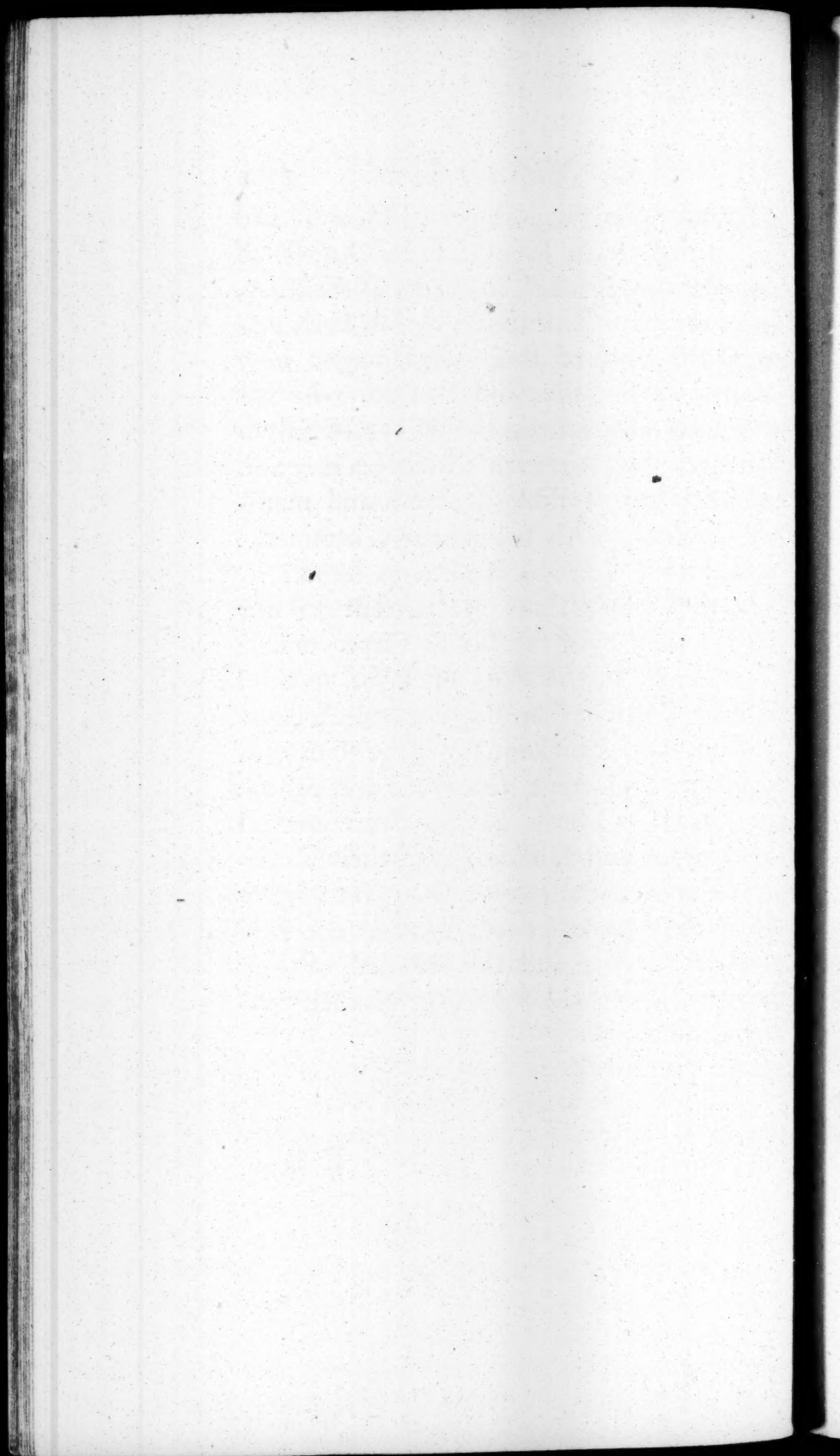
far more difficult by the Height from which he is fallen.

UPON the whole, let those who have hitherto walked with Fear and Reverence in the Path of Duty, or having erred and strayed, have by Repentance returned to them, hold fast their Integrity, and go on with Diligence, increasing with the Increase of God. Let them hope indeed comfortably of their Condition towards him, and their Interest in his Promises; but let their Hope be such as may not make them ashamed: not a presumptuous Confidence in their Strength and Security from Danger, but such a Hope as will raise and inspirit their Applications; such as, the farther they go on, and the nearer they approach to the End of their Journey, may render them more lively and active in running the Race that is set before them, and more vigilant against every Enemy that may interrupt their Progress, that they may *so run as to obtain.*

BUT alas! the unconverted Sinner has other Inferences to make from this Doctrine. For if they who have hitherto persevered in Duty, who have a comfortable
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Affurance that they stand in Grace, and are entitled to the Hopes of the Gospel; if even they must thro' so many Difficulties, such continued Care and Watchfulness, pass on to the End of their Pilgrimage; how much more has the Sinner to do, who has gone long astray from the Ways of Salvation; who must return so far back again, and with inexpressible Labour and manifold Conflicts with the Enemy, attain the Station on which the Righteous stand?

If these Reflections are present to our Minds, they will by God's Grace enable all, who are in the Way of Life, to hold on their Course with Vigour and Circumspection, and quicken the Repentance of the Sinner; preserve the one, and restore the other; 'till both having overcome all the Dangers and Difficulties of their Christian Warfare, shall, from the great Master whom they have served, receive the End of their Hopes, and the Reward of their Labours, even the Salvation of their immortal Souls.





S E R M O N VII.

The Death and Sufferings of *Christ*
foretold and described.

Preach'd on GOOD-FRIDAY.



ISAIAH liii. 5.

---He was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities: The Chastisement of our Peace was upon him, and by his Stripes we are healed.

THE Death and Passion of our
Blessed Lord, as it is the great
Article on which the whole
Christian Scheme is built, so
our Reflections on it suggest to us the
strongest Motives to all those Virtues and
Graces,

Graces, which qualify us to be Partakers of the Benefits of it. The Disciples therefore of the Gospel can never too often contemplate this endearing Instance of their Master's Love. But the Piety of the Church has particularly recommended this Subject to our Meditation in the present Solemnity; we should now more especially employ our Thoughts on what the Son of God endured for the Redemption of a sinful World. And I think there is no Passage in Holy Scripture which represents this great Event in more affecting Terms, than the mournful Eloquence of the Prophet in the Chapter before us. So clear and distinct were the Views, in which the Holy Spirit revealed this Article to the Faith of this his Servant, that even the chosen Witnesses of our Lord's Passion, who saw with their Eyes their bleeding Master hang upon the Cross, are not more passionate in their Descriptions of it: *He is despised* (said he *) *and rejected of Men: He was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He is brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before*

* Vc. 3, 4, 7, 8, 9.

before her Shearers is dumb, so he opened not his Mouth. He was taken from Prison and from Judgment. He was cut off out of the Land of the Living. And he made his Grave with the Wicked, and with the Rich in his Death; though he had done no Violence, neither was any Deceit in his Mouth.

THE End and Intention of these Sufferings of the *Messiah*, the Prophet reminds us of in the Words of my Text: He was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities: The Chastisement of our Peace was upon him, and by his Stripes we are healed.

THIS Scripture may be considered either,

- I. As a Prophecy, the manifest Completion of which in the Death and Sufferings of the *Blessed Jesus*, is one of the strongest Arguments to convince our Faith, that he was that very *Messiah*, which should come into the World. Or,

II. WE

II. WE may consider it as a Declaration of the End intended, and the Effect obtained by the Passion of the *Messiah*, viz. The Atonement of our Sins, and the restoring us to a State of Peace and Friendship with God. I shall treat each of these briefly, and proceed

III. To what I principally intend in this Discourse, to suggest those Meditations to our Thoughts, and those Affections to our Souls, which so sublime a Subject, and so amazing an Instance of Divine Compassion requires from us. And,

I. THE manifest Completion of this Prophecy, in the Death and Sufferings of our Lord, is a convincing Argument to our Faith, that he is that very *Messiah* which should come into the World.

THAT the Adoration of a crucified God should be difficultly received by the more inquisitive Part of the *Gentile* World, we are not so much to wonder; because it was a Doctrine that seemed at first View contrary

trary to the very Idea of the Divine Nature, and refuted even in it's Principle by the Impossibility of the Deity. And, what particularly discouraged the Reception of it among the common People, it was generally treated with Ridicule, and exposed them to an obvious and ungrateful Topick of Reproach from every Infidel they met with. And having never been prepared by any previous Revelation to expect a Redeemer in so mean and contemptible a Character, 'tis hardly to be imagined that their Prejudices should immediately be prevailed on, to give the Arguments that persuaded their Belief, a serious and attentive Hearing. But the *Jews* were so expressly directed to look for a *Messiah* without Form or Comeliness, a Man of Sorrows, who should make his Soul an Offering for Sin, and be numbered with the Transgressors; and saw all these Predictions so evidently fulfilled in the Blessed *Jesus*, that the Completion of no Prophecy concerning the *Messiah* can seem more wonderful to us, than that of their rejecting him. His Death was typified in every Sacrifice they offered, in almost every Right and Ceremony of
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their Law, and described in so lively a Manner, even in the most minute Circumstances of it, by their Prophets, that nothing could be wanting to their Conviction, but attentively to compare the Draught with the Original.

FOR view him only as he was described in the Prophecy before us. Was it foretold that he should be a Man of Sorrows? and was ever Sorrow like his Sorrow? Was he to be despised and rejected of Men? Thus came the Blessed *Jesus* unto his own, and his own received him not, but preferred even a Rebel and a Murderer before him. Was he to be led as a Lamb to the Slaughter, patient and resigned a Sheep before her Shearers? Behold the Lamb of God, the meek and humble *Jesus*, who when he was reviled, reviled not again. Though he could have commanded Legions of Angels to his Rescue, yet dragged to *Calvary* without Opposition or Complaint; no Voice was heard from him either to appease the Rage of his Persecutors, or implore the Pity of the Beholders: *Weep not for me* (says he, to those who attended

tended him with Tears) *but weep for yourselves, ye Daughters of Jerusalem.* Was he to make his Grave with the Wicked, to be numbered with the Transgressors, and to make Intercession for the Transgressors? Behold him expiring in the Torments of the Cross in the midst of Thieves, and praying for his Murderers. Other Prophets have been so particular, as to prefix the very Time, in which the *Messiah* should be cut off*. The Prophet *Zachary*† foretels the Price he was to be sold for, and the Employment of the Money. The *Psalmist* describes the very Manner and Circumstances of his Death; that they should *pierce his Hands and his Feet*‡: The very Expressions of Reproach that should be cast upon him. *He trusted in God that he would deliver him, let him deliver him, if he will have him:* The parting his Garments by Lot by the Soldiers; and the giving him Vinegar to drink. Great Part of these Predictions have been understood by the *Jews* themselves to relate to the *Messiah*; and this Relation has been affirmed by the Testimony of God,

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* Dan. ix. 26. † Zech. xi. 12. ‡ Psal. xxii. 8, 16.

proved by the best direct Evidences that were ever produced for any Divine Revelation, as full and conclusive as 'twas possible for God himself to give: And the Correspondence of the Death and Sufferings of our Lord to them is so punctual and exact, that they seem rather like a History of Events past, than a Prophecy of such as were to come: And if they were not fulfilled in the Person of *Jesus of Nazareth*, 'tis impossible we should ever know when any Prophecy is fulfilled. And nothing but the Curse of God denounced against that stubborn People, *that hearing they should hear, and not understand; and seeing they should see, and not perceive*, can account for an Infidelity that could resist the Evidence of so clear a Proof. This single Chapter of *Isaiah* now before us, furnished *Philip* with an Argument for the Conversion of the Eunuch; and has been found effectual in the Conviction of some modern Examples of Infidelity, where other Arguments have been heard without Impression. But,

II. WE are also hence informed in the Occasion and End of the *Messiah's* Sufferings. *He was bruised for our Iniquities: The Chastisement of our Peace was upon him, and by his Stripes we are healed.*

THAT he suffered not for his own Sins, the Piety and Innocence of his Life may abundantly assure us. He went about doing good, healing the Infirmities, and correcting the Errors of Mankind: He gave Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lame, and preached the Gospel to the Poor. 'Twas the public Confession of the Multitude that he had done all Things well. The Declaration of his Judges, both *Pilate* and *Herod*, that after the strictest Examination, they found no Fault in him. The Testimony of the Centurion, an impartial, unprejudiced Witness, *Certainly this was a righteous Man.* Now we could not acquit the Justice of God from Partiality in suffering so innocent, so exemplary a Person to be thus barbarously used and murdered, unless some excellent End were to be promoted by it. And this we are assured from Scripture was the redeem-

ing Mankind from a State of Sin and Misery; and that this was accomplished by his taking upon himself the Penalties due to our Impieties, and bearing the Burden of an offending World. For it consisted not with the Majesty and Immutability of the Divine Lawgiver, to remit the Penalties of Disobedience without some Satisfaction paid to his Justice. Such a Conduct must have appeared rather like Tame-ness than Lenity, and have exposed his Authority to all the Insults of Vice and Impudence. Some Satisfaction therefore was necessary: And what was there which offending Man could offer unto his Creator? Could the Blood of Bullocks or Rams take away his Sin? With what imaginable Reason could it be presumed that God should be appeased by the Destruction of his Creatures? Should he multiply his Oblations before him, and pour out upon his Altar, Rivers of Oil? Alas! in all this he could give him but his own, and discharge but a Part of that Debt, which the common Mercies of Providence required from him. Should he sacrifice unto him his First-born, the Fruit of his Body for the Sin

Sin of his Soul? This were in all the Views of Reason, but adding one Impiety to another, and the Sacrifice itself must want an Atonement. Should he then offer himself to the Curse of the Law to undergo the Wages of his Sin? This were to bear, and not to divert the Punishment: And even in this Submission, the utmost any one could suffer, could satisfy for no more than his own Offences. No, it must cost more to redeem a World of Sinners, than Man had to pay. But the Divine Compassion left us not in this Despair of Redress; himself contrived a Method by which his Justice should be satisfied, and yet the Offender be saved. The eternal Son of his Love took upon him the Burden and Penalties of our Transgressions: He who knew no Sin became Sin for us, and by one Oblation of himself once offered, paid a full, perfect, and sufficient Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World. For he who offers unto the offended Party what he has as great a Value for as he has hatred for the Offence, may properly be said to satisfy for and undergo the Penalties due to that Offence.

This is implied in the very Terms of Ransom and Redemption, which signify the Payment of a Price which the Offended will receive as an Equivalent, for the Penalties incurred by the Criminal ; whether that consists in any Thing of Value deposited, or some Performance which the Offended will accept. And thus did our Blessed Lord by the Innocence of his Life, the Bitterness of his Death, and the Dignity of his Person, offer unto God what he had as intense a Love for, as he had Provocation from the Sins of the whole World. Thus did he pay down the utmost Farthing for our Redemption, and thereby rescue the Captive into Liberty, and restore the Rebel into a State of Grace and Favour. Thus was he wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities, and by these Stripes of the Master was the Servant healed. And therefore

III. LET our Devotion employ the present holy Season in giving this sublime Subject, this amazing Instance of Divine Love, its due Influence, in suggesting proper

per Meditations to our Thoughts, and Affections to our Souls. And,

I. LET us with Trembling and Astonishment reflect how dreadful an Evil Sin must be, which nothing could expiate but the Blood of the Son of God. If we consider Sin in all the terrible Consequences that had before attended it, as the Parent and Cause of all Misery, as what derived a Curse on Nature, robbed Man of his Innocence and Felicity: That 'twas Sin which provoked the Almighty to descend in so many fearful Examples of Vengeance on the World; which broke up the Fountains of the great Deep, and kindled the Flames of *Sodom*: That the Extinction of Nations, and the Desolation of Kingdoms; that all the Instances of Misery and Affliction which attend Mankind; were but the Effects of this destructive Evil: And if we add to all this those Terrors, which the natural Presumptions of Conscience open to our Prospect beyond the Grave, what Hatred and Aversion should these Reviews give us towards this great Enemy of our Nature, this Destroyer of our Hap-

pinefs? With what Paſſion then, with what new Reſentment of Soul muſt the Chriſtian behold it, bringing down the Son of God from the Boſom of his Father, ſpoiling him of his Glory, and expoſing him to the Weakneſs and Indigence of Mortality, to the Shame and Anguiſh of the Croſs? All the former Effects, either known or feared of Sin, fatal as they were, yet affected only the Sinner. The Soul that ſinned, that died; and the Offender with the greateſt Juſtice ſuffered the Conſequence of his own Folly. But here we ſee the Author and Fountain of all Good, wounded by Sin, and bruised by Iniquity: The Innocent oppreſſed by the Burthen of the Guilty: The Beloved of God ſlain by the Sins of Men. With that Humility and Abhorrence of himſelf ſhould offending Duſt reflect on ſo ſad an Effect of his Impiety? With what Loathing and Deſtation ſhould he fly thoſe Crimes, which nailed his Friend and Patron to the Croſs, and ſhed the precious Blood of his Redeemer? Let us then,

2. REFLECT what Returns of Gratitude we owe to so amazing an Instance of Divine Love towards us: Let it inflame our Affections to consider distinctly what our Lord and Master did, and suffered for our Sakes: Let us attend him in all the melancholy Stages of his Passion, and behold him either deserted or betrayed by his Servants, dragged by a rude Multitude before a partial and enraged Tribunal: The Creator and Governor of the World crowned with Thorns, contemned, reviled, and spit-
ted on, the Scorn of the Magistrate, the Sport of insolent Soldiers. Let us behold him fainting under the Burden of his Cross, the innocent *Jesus* numbered with the Transgressors, led to a cursed Death with Thieves and Malefactors. Let it pierce our Souls to reflect how his Hands and Feet were torn by the Nails, and his Side by the Spear: The Prince of Life expired in Agonies, amidst the Blasphemies and Reproaches of his own Creatures: and let us at the same Time remember, that he endured all this for our Sakes, for rebellious, ungrateful Man, his Enemy, his Betrayer, and Murderer. Never was Love
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like this Love, nor Compassion like that of our God. Greater Love than this, says the Apostle*, hath no Man, *that a Man lay down his Life for his Friends*; but greater Love even than this has God shewn to his Creatures, in that while we were yet Enemies *Christ died for us*. To have restored the Rebel to Favour upon his Submission, to have accepted his Repentance, and hearkened to his Intreaties of Pardon, had itself been an Act of Mercy, which neither the Prayers of Men could hope for, nor their Obedience return. What Heart then can conceive, or what Tongue express the Affection of *Christ* to his Creatures; who, before the Offender made any Overtures of Submission, while he persisted in his Rebellion, disclaimed and rejected the Offers of Grace, and even reviled and persecuted the Messenger of it, not only interceded for the Pardon of this unrelenting Enemy, but even laid down his own Life for the Purchase of it? *Lord, what is Man, that thou art thus mindful of him, or the Son of Man that thou soregardest him?* Thou madest him lower than
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* John xv. 13.

the Angels, yet them for their Disobedience thou hast reserved in Chains of Darkness, condemned to a miserable Immortality; but unto Man, equally rebellious, equally apostate from thee and Goodness, thou hast given a Saviour, even thine only Son, to be the Propitiation for our Sins. And shall any thing be too severe to be endured, too hard to be performed, or too dear to be parted with for his Sake, who thus loved us, and gave himself for us? When the Redeemer of our Souls requires us to resign the Interests or Pleasures of this Life; to submit to Injuries, Reproach, or Affliction in his Service, can we withhold the one, or decline the other, when we remember that he descended from the right Hand of the Majesty of God, and endured the Shame and Tortures of the Cross for our Salvation? With what Readiness should we comply with the Requests of so great a Benefactor? With what Alacrity obey his Commands? All that we enjoy or hope for we owe to his Favour, and our very Souls are the Purchase of his Blood. And should the Friend to whom we are so infinitely obliged, require some great Thing

Thing of us, should we refuse to perform it ! How much more when he only invites us to pursue our own greatest Interest, when he Commands us to be happy, when he intreats us to be saved ? How monstrous then must be our Ingratitude, if we continue in those Sins which repeat the Agonies of his Passion, which make his Wounds to bleed afresh, and put him anew to shame ? But as the Love of our Master and only Saviour *Jesus Christ*, thus dying for us, should engage our utmost Returns of Gratitude and Obedience, and prevail on us to devote our Lives to his Service and Pleasure, and to fly with Abhorrence from whatever will grieve and offend him ; so it is farther proposed to our Meditations as an Example of Patience, Humility, and Charity.

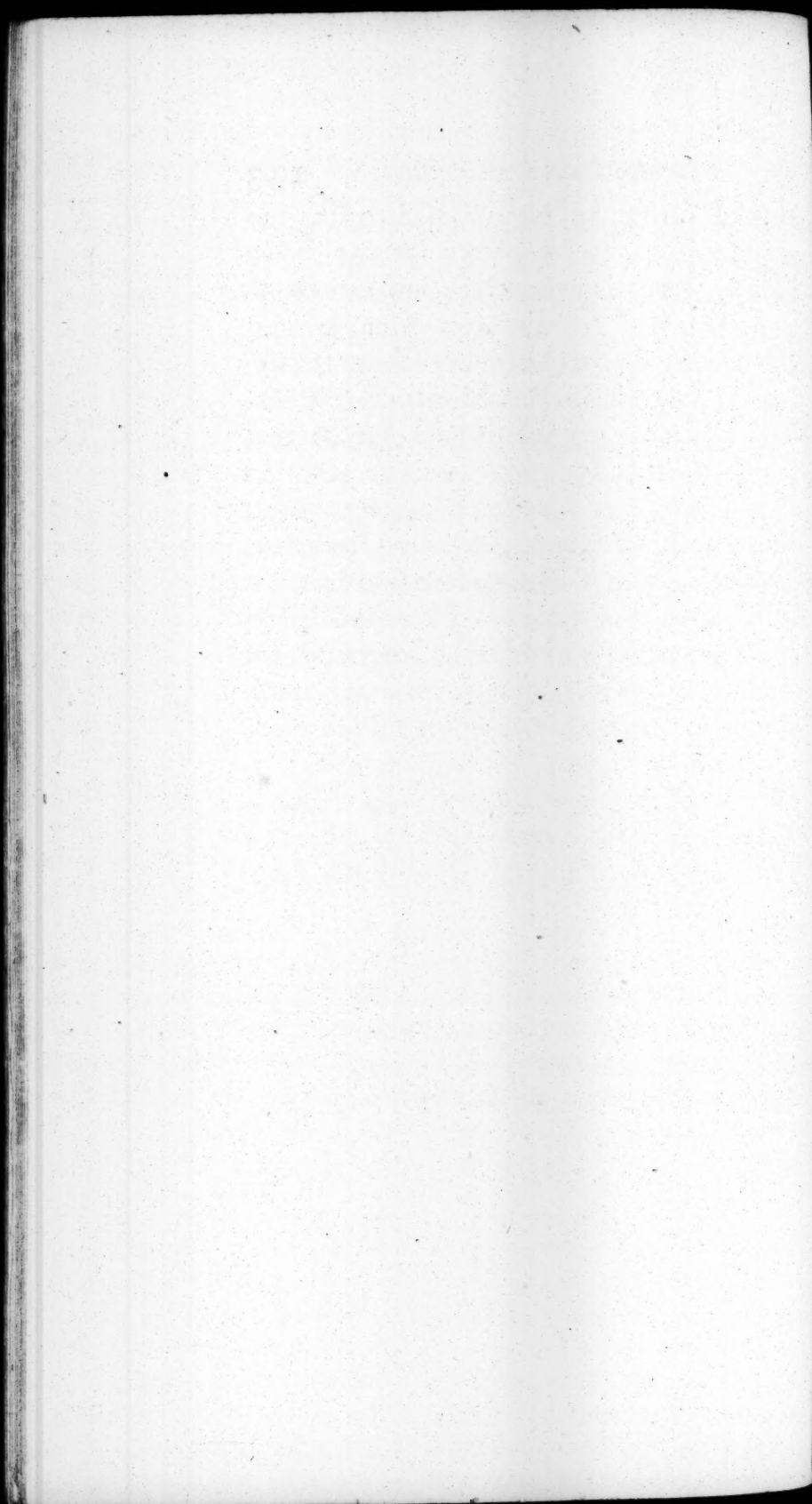
How should it animate us in all the Trials of our Faith, in all Miseries and Afflictions of Life, to reflect that our Lord and Master was made perfect thro' Sufferings ? Are we grieved with the Scorn and Derision of the Prophane ? Thus was the Blessed *Jesus* despised and rejected of Men. Is Tribulation, Distress, and Persecution

tion our Portion? Thus was the Captain of our Salvation a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief. And how should it mortify all our Fondness and Contention for the Poms and Honours of this World, to consider that the Son of God chose to appear in the meanest and most ignoble Circumstances of Humanity; lived an indigent, dependent Life, and submitted to the infamous Death of a Slave? And lastly, how should it calm our Resentments, and extend our Charity, even to the greatest Enemies, to remember that our Blessed Lord died for his sinful Creatures? Even the Agonies of his Torments abated not his Love, but he expired interceding for his Murderers. Are the Offences we resent and complain of, to be compared with the Provocation of a World of Sinners against their God? The fiercest Contentions of Men are between Creatures equal in Nature, and capable by the greatest Distinction of Circumstances and Authority of but a very small Remove one from another. But the Enemies of God are the Work of his Creation, the Dependants of his Power, and whom he has endeavoured to oblige

oblige by Wonders of his Love: If therefore God could forgive Injuries heighten'd by so many aggravating Circumstances, Sins against his Power and Authority, Sins against his Mercy and Goodness, and Sins of his Creatures and necessary Dependants, and forgive them in a Manner so expressive of Tenderness and Concern, as to substitute his own Son to suffer in their Stead, what Provocations can we ever receive that ought not to command the same Pardon and Condescension from us? Ought not we to be merciful, since our Father which is in Heaven is thus amazingly merciful? To conclude, the Son of God has washed us in his Blood, has cleans'd and purify'd the Stains of our Nature, and renewed our Title to eternal Happiness; and shall we again return to our Pollution, and shall we forfeit the Mercies of this second Covenant also, and give our own and our Creator's Enemy the Triumph of a second Conquest over us? Let us look back and tremble at the Danger we have escaped; and let us remember, that if we neglect the Overtures of this Grace, there remains no farther Sacrifice for our Sin, no fresh Cove-
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nant of Grace to be proposed to us, no new Redeemer to be offered for us : Even infinite Mercy is exhausted, and can do no more than has already been done for our Salvation. Let us therefore labour to secure an Interest in the Merits of this Mediator : Let it not be in vain for us that this *Jesus*, this Saviour, is come into the World ; but let his Doctrine engage our Faith, and his Commands our Obedience. And let us with a lively Devotion join the sacred Hymns of those ten Thousand Times ten Thousand Voices that surround the Throne of God, saying, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive Power and Wisdom, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing ; and therefore Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power be unto him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever**.

* Rev. v. 12. 13.



waved Sheaf in the *Levitical* Law sanctify'd the whole Harvest; so *Christ*, who was sowed in Dishonour, even as we are, being raised in Glory, should derive the same Privilege on all those who are his, at his Coming.

THE Prospect beyond the Grave, and what became of this thoughtful busy Creature, when he was removed from the Scene of this World, has been a Speculation, that has amused the Vulgar, and puzzled the Philosophy of the Wise in all Ages of the World.

HUMAN Nature could not sustain the Reflection of having the Prospect closed with this Life, and all its Schemes and Expectations to determine with this frail and perishable Composition of Flesh and Blood; and therefore the Vulgar supported themselves with Fables, and the Philosophers with some rational Probability of a future State. But their most successful Researches upon this Subject could never rise higher than to a fair Possibility, and the Conclusions they came to, were such as they rather wish'd might be true, than such as they could give a firm and confident

dent Assent to; and left the Atheist Room for Disputation, and even the best Men but a diffident Expectation of their Immortality.

BUT for the Resurrection of the Body, this was such a Contradiction to their Philosophy, that the Apostle of my Text had no sooner proposed it to the great Masters of Knowledge at *Athens*, but he himself was ridiculed as a Babbler, and his Doctrine exploded as an incredible Fable. And indeed no Article of Christianity met with a more difficult Reception in the World, than this of the Resurrection of the Body.

FOR that this dissolved and disunited Frame should ever be restored to its first Strength and Beauty; that ever these scattered Materials, dispersed thro' all the Elements, should be recollected into the same Form and Comeliness; that the Urn should restore its Ashes, and the Sea give up her Dead, was an Assertion so amazing, and encumbered with so many Difficulties and Objections, that bare unassisted Reason could never get over them. Even the *Jews* themselves, who had the Privilege of a nearer Access to God, had yet but very dark

148 *Christ's Resurrection*

Notices of this great Truth ; and the Scripture tells us, that there was a considerable Sect even of those who pretended to Learning among them (namely the *Sadduces*) who believed neither Resurrection, Angel, nor Spirit. No, it was Christianity first clearly proved this noble and important Truth to the World, and this Life and Immortality were brought to Light by the Gospel. *Christ* our Saviour has asserted the Strength of our Nature in its Innocency, and in his Triumph over Death and Hell: He has unbarred the Gates of the Grave, and set the Captive free ; and has assured us that as he the first Fruits is risen, so shall they also rise who are his, at his Coming. 'Tis to be observed indeed, that the Apostle in this Scripture infers no more from the Resurrection of *Christ*, than the Resurrection of the Just, those who are *Christ's*, at his Coming ; because this was what the Design of this Chapter made it principally necessary he should prove to the *Corinthians*. The Design is evident from the Inference he makes from the whole in the last Verse, *viz.* to support their Faith under those Discouragements
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and Persecutions their Profession in that early Age exposed them to, that they might be *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord.* Now the proper Argument, from which this Effect was to be hoped for, was such as convinced them that *Christ* would certainly raise them, and reward their Patience and Resolution, and make them an abundant Satisfaction for all the Afflictions they endured for his Sake. He had therefore no Occasion to extend his Proof farther than the Resurrection of the Just, since this was sufficient to assure their Expectations, and convince them that their Labour should not be in vain in the Lord. And the same Reasons will always account for those Expressions of our Lord himself, which seem to confine the Resurrection to his Elect, whom he frequently promises to raise up at the last Day, without any Notice of the rest of the World. But that the Resurrection should be general, we are abundantly assured from other Scriptures. For thus our Saviour tells us*, *that all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice,*

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* John v. 28, 29.

150 *Christ's Resurrection*

and come forth, they that have done good, to the Resurrection of Life; and they that have done evil, to the Resurrection of Damnation. And St. Paul even in this Chapter makes this also to be a Consequence of our Lord's Resurrection; where he tells us, *that as in Adam all (i. e. just and unjust) died, so in Christ shall all (just and unjust) be made alive**. I shall therefore consider this Subject in general, as it regards the Resurrection of the whole Race of *Adam*. In treating of it, I shall at present look upon the Resurrection of our Lord as a Truth of Fact established upon sufficient Evidence, and acknowledged to be true; and endeavour from the latter Part of the Words before us to shew,

I. THE Certainty and Connexion of our own Resurrection. And,

II. DIRECT you to those Meditations this Doctrine ought to suggest to us.

I. THAT our blessed Saviour, who was himself a Divine Person, and consequently endured

* Verse 22.

endued with the Power of God, might by his own unbounded Activity restore the Body he had chosen to its former Union, especially within the Space of three Days, when the Balms and Spices which the Piety of *Joseph* had brought, had kept it so entire, that even naturally it could not have seen Corruption, seems attended with a great many Circumstances that make it reconcileable enough to the natural Apprehensions of Men, or at least abate much of the Difficulties that might withhold our Assent: But that a human Body, dissolved and crumbled into Dust, without any Trace or Feature of the Form it once appeared in; when all its Lineaments are destroyed, and the whole Mass of its Materials, Bones, and Blood, and Sinews mixed together in an undistinguishable Confusion; that (I say) such Disorder as this should ever be retrieved, that this blended Mass should resume its former Symmetry and Proportions, is such an amazing Instance of Knowledge and Power, that our most refined Speculations can very difficultly conceive an Art or Artificer that can be equal to so stupendious an Effect. But farther,

152 *Christ's Resurrection*

ther, if we consider these blended Materials not only confused among themselves, or with the neighbouring Bodies, but scattered and dispersed over the whole Face of Nature, the Sport of Winds and Rivers, partly evaporated into Air, and partly diluted into Water, and fortuitously shared between all the Elements; who shall find out or recall the wandering Particles Home, and fix them in their old Vicinity? Had we indeed all our different Cells and Apartments in the Earth, did Vaults and Sepulchres keep all human Reliques divided and separated from the Confusion of other Bodies, it would be but like a curious Machine taken into Pieces, which, while the Parts are preserved together, it is no great Difficulty to the Artificer to re-unite to its former Figure and Motions; and, whatever may be surprizing to the Ignorant in such a Performance, the Skill of the Workman will easily account for: But what Skill or what Power shall recollect the Dust, which Winds and Waves have dispersed over the Face of the whole Earth? Who shall discern a Human Particle, disguised perhaps now under the Appearance of Air, or Water,

ter, or Plant, or Mineral; and when discovered, command it back to the Post it once had?

BUT the Difficulty will yet increase upon us, if we consider a Human Body not only thus dissipated and dispersed, but devoured by Fish or Beast, and so entered into the Constitution of another Animal; nay, and perhaps in some Periods of the several Revolutions it undergoes, become the Flesh and Blood of another Man: Whose then shall it be in the Resurrection? Who shall be the Owner of this straggling Dust, and to what Proprietor shall it belong?

THESE are the Difficulties that gave the Doctrine of the Resurrection so cold and diffident a Reception in the World, and raised the Scruples of the Weak, and the Contempt and Ridicule of the Pretenders to more accurate Knowledge and Learning. But had they duly considered the unlimited Extent of infinite Knowledge and infinite Power, these two Attributes had been sufficient to have silenced their Scruples, and they had adored and not ridiculed the amazing Mystery. He who saw and form'd us in the Womb, whose Eyes beheld our
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Substance yet being imperfect, and in whose Book all our Members were written, keeps every Atom of them still under his Eye, and pursues them thro' all the Changes and Revolutions they undergo: Lost and insensible as they are to us, they are to his all-seeing Eye so many distinct Beings, in a fair and regular Order. For tho' they fly up to Heaven, he is there; or if they are thrust down to Hell, he is there also: Tho' they are scattered on the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermost Parts of the Sea; even there shall his Omnipresence find them, and thence shall his right Hand fetch them out, and lead them Home to their ancient Proprietor. Can the least Particle of Matter be so small, as to escape the Knowledge of Omniscience? Can it hide itself from him who created it, by whose Appointment it succeeds into various Stations, and is applied to serve different Ends of his Providence, and is employed by the great Artificer sometimes in one Part, and sometimes in another of the Works of his Hands? Tho' it runs thro' all the Variety of Bodies in Nature, Earth or Water, Plants or Animals, or even

even different Men; yet it passës its several Stages by the immediate Commission and Direction of the Almighty, and may by him be commanded to return to the same Post it once filled. And as his Knowledge is thus sufficient to find out the Materials, of which we were made, so his power is sufficient to put them together again. We know that the Power of God can perform any Thing which does not necessarily imply a Contradiction. Now 'tis certainly no Contradiction, that the same Thing which once was, should exist again: That those Particles of Matter which were once united in the same Body, should be restored to the same Union. Can it be difficult to that Almighty Power, which first created Man, and the whole World out of nothing; who can with a Thought reduce it to nothing, and with a second restore it to the same Form and Order again; to command any Parts of Matter, however separated and divided from each other, into what Order or Appearance he pleases, especially to fit them up into the same Symmetry and Lineaments they once had? Nature is the Art of God, and as he can take a Body
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to Pieces, and dispose of them where he pleases, to us perhaps not without the Appearance of irretrievable Confusion, but with Respect to his own Knowledge, into the most regular and methodical Repositories; so he can with the same Facility put them together again, and renew their Acquaintance with those Parts, to which they were formerly allied. 'Tis agreed by those Philosophers who are most inclined to dispute this Article, that Matter is unperishable in itself, and that all the Destruction it can undergo, is no more than a Passing from one Form to another. The Matter therefore of the Body must necessarily remain; and since Matter, as such, is equally capable of all Forms, those Particles which before composed an Human Body, must at least be as capable as any other of being raised into that Figure again. 'Tis plain therefore, that the Materials must remain, and remain in a Capacity of being re-united into the same Form; and that the Power of God is able to unite them, is also evident, because 'tis no more than he actually has done once before. Since therefore God Almighty is allowed
to

to have Knowledge and Abilities equal to this great Work, the only Question that can remain, is, whether he has at any Time assured us that he will perform it: And for this we appeal to that Revelation God has made of himself in Scripture. In the Old Testament indeed the Discoveries of this Myſtery are leſs frequent and clear, than thoſe he has given us in the New: yet they were ſuch, as to thoſe, who duly attended to the Light they gave, afforded a ſufficient Conviction of this Truth, and a firm Reliance on the glorious Promiſes contained in it. *I know* (ſays holy *Job*) *that my Redeemer liveth: and tho' after my Skin, Worms deſtroy this Body, yet in my Fleſh ſhall I ſee God; whom I ſhall ſee for myſelf, and my Eyes ſhall behold, and not another: Tho' my Reins be conſumed within me* *. To this we may add that of the Prophet *Iſaiah*: *Thy dead Men ſhall live, together with my dead Body ſhall they ariſe; awake and ſing, ye that dwell in the Duſt; for thy Dew is as the Dew of Herbs, and the Earth ſhall caſt out the Dead* †. Thus alſo *Daniel* tells us, *They that ſleep in the Duſt*

* *Job* xix. 25, 26, 27.† *Iſai.* xxvi. 19.

158 *Christ's Resurrection*

Dust shall awake, some to everlasting Life, and some to Shame and everlasting Contempt.* These are Scriptures of such exprefs and unavoidable Force, that one would think it impossible for so large a Division of the *Jews*, as the *Sadduces* were, to resist the Evidence of so clear an Authority. But the Providence of God, designing the last and most perfect Declaration of his Will under the Gospel, has so clearly revealed this Article to our Faith in the Scripture of the New Testament, that no one has ever doubted whether it were an Article of Christianity. 'Tis proposed in almost every Page to the Disciples of the Gospel, as their great Support under all the Difficulties and Persecutions they must expect from the Malice of a prejudiced World. Thus we find our Blessed Saviour frequently encouraging his Disciples with this Promise, *that he would raise them up at the last Day†.* And St Paul confesses, that without this Expectation, Christianity, under the Disadvantages it then lay, had nothing engaging enough to recommend it to the World: *If in this Life only we had Hope*

* Dan. xii. 2.

† John vi. 40, 44, 54, &c.

Hope (said he) *we were of all Men most miserable* *. 'Twas the Assurance of a Resurrection that gave Patience to the Confessor, and Courage to the Martyr; and inspired the first *Christians* with that undaunted Resolution, that they not only despised, but even gloried in their Sufferings. And the great Argument the Apostles appealed to for the Proof of this Article, is the Resurrection of their Lord and Master, who is therefore called the *first Fruits of those that sleep*, and an Earnest of the Resurrection of the whole Human Species. *Christ* has condescended to incorporate us into the same Body, of which himself is Head, and has commanded us to depend on him, with this Assurance, that as he himself is risen, so will he also rise up those to be his. As the Head is glorified, so shall also the Members be glorified with him: And where the Head is, there shall the Members be also: *And as in Adam all died, even so in Christ shall all be made alive* †. But I shall not detain you with a Recital of those Proofs which

* 1 Cor. xv. 19.

† Col. i. 18.

which might be brought for this Article from the Writings of the New Testament, but look upon it as allowed by every one to be a Doctrine of the Gospel. And proceed,

II. To such an Application of this Subject, as may be in some Measure answerable to the great Importance of it. And,

I. LET us reflect on that great and terrible Day, when the Earth shall be again in Travail with her Sons, and at one fruitful Throw, bring forth all the Generations of Learned and Unlearned, Rich and Poor, Noble and Ignoble Dust; no longer differenced and distinguished by Titles and Quality, but by the Guilt or Innocence of their Lives. Let us frequently consider what Figure we shall make in that great Assembly, and how we are prepared to meet our Judge and our Redeemer. Piety indeed and Innocence soften the Terrors of this awful Prospect, and make even Death and Judgment a desirable Expectation. To the Righteous 'tis the great Strength of his Hopes, the Support and Encouragement of his Obedience: The Hour, in Expectation of which he patiently

ly bears the Burden and Heat of the Day, all the Difficulties of Duty, and the Discountenance he meets with from a wicked and prophane World. That Cloud of Witnesses the Apostle mentions, who had Trials of Mockings and Scourgings, of Bonds and Imprisonment; were stoned, sawed asunder, were slain with the Sword, wander'd in Deserts and Mountains, destitute, afflicted, tormented; not only bore their Tortures with Patience, but would not accept Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection. To a Soul, supported with an Assurance of the Divine Favour in that Day, the Honours or Afflictions of this Life will be equally trifling and contemptible. Is Poverty and Disgrace his Portion? He knows it will determine in a few Years, and that an Eternity of Glory awaits his Perseverance. Are the Infirmities of the Body, Pains, and Diseases his Complaint? His Faith reminds him of the Day when this Corruptible shall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal, Immortality; when this Body shall no longer be that burdensome Incumbrance it now is, subject to pain, and Weakness, and Passion,

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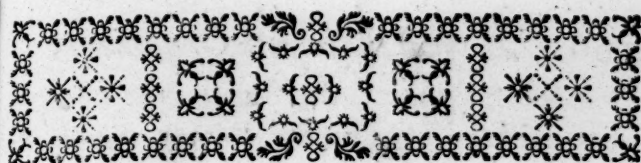
but spiritualized to a State of eternal Youth, and Strength, and Beauty, to a Similitude with the glorified Body of *Christ* our Saviour. With what lively Impressions of Gratitude does he reflect on that unwearyed Care of Providence, which conducts Man from the Womb, and gradually leads him to an Immortality of Glory; who protects him when alive, and guards him when dead, and makes even his Grave but a Repository to preserve the Reliques and Treasures of his Body; and from thence, as from a Wardrobe, re-appears the new Man framed out of the Materials of the old, and fitted for the Fruition of himself in Glory? With what Joy does he share in the Triumphs of his Redeemer, and behold the Bonds of Death broken, and the Power and Malice of Hell defeated, our Nature again cleansed and purified from the Stains of original Pollution, and restored to that Felicity, that Life and Immortality, which the Sin of *Adam* had spoiled us of? To the Ungodly indeed, and the Sinner, the Prospect is not thus easy and entertaining: It is with Confusion and Astonishment he must reflect on that Day,

Day, when every secret Impiety of his Life, the Sins of his Chamber and his Closet shall be produced before Men and Angels, and an eternal irreverfible Sentence be pronounced upon the Actions of Men. Eternity is in itfelf a Proſpect that Human Nature can't look into without a religious Awe and Concern; our Thoughts are loſt in the endleſs View, and return to us weary and unfatisfied, without finding either Bounds or Place to fix on. Now to him who may reaſonably expect to paſs all this endleſs Duration in Torments, as great as an offended God can inflict, how dreadful muſt the Approach of it be? and the Terrors of it, who can bear? He is tormented even before the Time, and his Damnation is begun on this ſide Hell. Let us then in this our Day ſuffer theſe Reflections to have their proper Efficacy, in exciting us to a due Preparation for that deciſive Hour: Let it influence every Thought, Word, and Action of our Lives, to remember that the Judge ſtandeth at the Door; that the Day approaches, when all that are in the Graves ſhall hear the Voice of God, and come forth to Judgment.

164 *Christ's Resurrection, &c.*

ment. And above all things, let us offer incessant Prayers to the Divine Majesty, that he would vouchsafe us the Assistance of his Grace, which alone can direct our Course thro' this troublesome and sinful World; that when our Lord shall appear, he may find us intent on the Duties of our Stations, may own us for his Servants before his Father and the holy Angels, and call us to the Possession of that eternal and heavenly Inheritance he has promised to those, *whom, when he comes, he shall find so doing.*





S E R M O N IX.

A good Life the best Ornament of
the Christian Profession.



TITUS ii. 10. latter Part.

*That they may adorn the Doctrine of
God our Saviour in all Things.*

THOUGH the Apostles of
Christ applied themselves to the
Conversion of Mankind, prin-
cipally by such Arguments as
proved the Reasonableness and Credibility
of their Doctrine; tho' they asserted the
Authority of their Mission, and that they
were Preachers sent from God, by those

166 *A good Life an Ornament*

Demonstrations of the Spirit, the miraculous Effects of Divine Power which attended their Ministry, and might challenge the greatest Enemies of the Gospel to object any Thing to the Morality of its Precepts ; yet still they appeared farther solicitous to enforce these Arguments with that great Recommendation to the Esteem of the World, a correspondent Purity in the Lives of its Disciples. This was a Part of their Ministry, in which they required their Profelytes to concur with them ; And particularly the Apostle of my Text commands *Titus*, not only to be a Pattern of good Works himself, but to use his episcopal Authority in exhorting every Rank and Order of Men, the Young and the Old, the Husband and the Wife, the Master and the Servant, to be exemplary in the Duties of their several Stations, and in every Part of their Conduct to adorn the Doctrine they professed. By this Expression of adorning the Doctrine of our Saviour, it is obvious to understand advancing the Credit and Esteem of it in the World ; behaving ourselves in such a Manner, that the Beauty of that Holiness it prescribes,

prescribes, may appear in our Lives ; and even the Enemies of our Religion may be forced to acknowledge the Power and Excellence of so venerable an Institution. I shall endeavour to recommend this Apostolical Precept to your Attention, by shewing,

I. THAT it is the Duty of every Christian to be concerned for the Reputation or Discredit his Life may bring on his Profession.

II. I SHALL consider what Conduct will acquit us of this Obligation.

AND, I. It is the Duty of every Christian to be concerned for the Reputation or Discredit his Life will bring on his Profession.

For though this Epistle be particularly directed to *Titus*, and in him to the Bishops and Pastors of the Flock of *Christ* ; yet this Consideration is here rather suggested to him as a proper Argument to persuade the Obedience of those under his Care, than a special Direction to himself. The Apostle

168 *A good Life an Ornament*

had employed the former Part of this Chapter in prescribing the Duties which it would be proper for him to recommend to every Condition and Relation of Life; and then subjoins this, as an universal Reason for their Compliance, that they might adorn the Doctrine of their Saviour. He had before exhorted *Titus* himself to be an Example of good Works; and he is here commanded to press the same Regularity on his own Charge, from this Consideration, that the Honour of their Religion depended on it. The Ministers indeed of the Gospel are especially required to shine as Lights in the World, because the Distinction of their Station renders their Conduct more observable, and the Presumption of their Knowledge, and the Dignity of their Office gives a peculiar Force and Authority to their Example: But the Light of inferior Christians is also to be visible: And as no Circumstances of Life can place a Man so far below the Notice of the World, but that his Virtues or Vices will render him, in some Degree, an Ornament or Disgrace to his Profession;

so

to a Christian Profession. 169

so none are below the Obligation of this Precept to promote the Credit of it.

FOR, shall we all think ourselves bound to consult the Reputation of our Friend, or our Family, and of the Laws and Constitutions of our Country; and shall the Honour of that God whom we serve, and the Religion by which we hope to be saved, have no share in our Concern? Can we with Indifference hear the Word of God, and the Sacred Name of our Saviour blasphemed, and at the same time reflect that the Scandal of our Lives gives the Occasion for it? For, after all we can say to disparage the Argument, Men do, and will judge of Religion, by the Influence it has on the Lives of its Disciples, and be inclined to think contemptibly of that Faith, which has no apparent moral Effect on the Professors of it. Not all the subtle Objections of Sophisters and *Rabbies* against the Truth and Credibility of the Gospel, so much prejudiced the Reception of it in the World, as the Reproach of those infamous Crimes, with which they aspersed the Assemblies of Christians. And therefore the Apologists of the Church, in
their

170 *A good Life an Ornament*

their Vindications, appeal not so much to the Purity of the Rules and Precepts of their Religion, as to the Innocence of their Lives; and defy the Malice of their Adversaries to produce one impure, unjust, or intemperate Person among all who were called by the Name of *Christ*. Thus was the Gospel adorned in the Innocence and Simplicity of its Infancy; and thus were they of the contrary Part made ashamed, having no evil Thing to say of them. And let us not imagine that the Reasons or Design of this Precept were confined to the primitive State of the Church; or that the first Converts only of Christianity were concerned to defend the Honour of their Religion from the Spite and Detraction of a Heathen World. That Spirit of Unbelief, of Reproach and Blasphemy, which at first opposed itself to rising Christianity, continues still, and will always continue to revile and persecute the Servants of *Christ*. Even in these Days of Security and Establishment, when the Gospel has the Defence and Protection of national Laws, have we not seen our holy Religion exposed to publick Scorn as a Farce or Fable,

Fable, every Order of its Ministry vilified, and the Articles of its Faith not only opposed, but ridiculed? Have Examples been wanting, who have owned, and even gloried in Prophaneness and Infidelity? And are we not encompassed by Multitudes, who have Hatred and evil Will at our *Sion*? who watch every careless Word, every ungarded Action of our Lives; who are ready to aggravate all our Faults, to expose our Infirmities, and traduce even our Virtues themselves? And if the Number and Malice of their Enemies was an Argument to the first Christians for such a prudent and regular Behaviour as would silence their Calumnies, and procure Esteem and Reverence to the Gospel, the same Reasons should enforce this Duty on us under the same Obligations, as the Apostle enjoined it on them.

CHRISTIANITY indeed will always demand this Tribute from its Disciples. 'Tis implied in every one of its Commands, that we should not only obey them ourselves, but use our best Endeavours to recommend the same Performances to others also. And since an exemplary Depart-
ment

172 *A good Life an Ornament*

ment in the Duties of our Station, is the most probable Method to produce this Effect; to reclaim the Dissolute, convert the Infidel, and win the greatest Enemies of our Faith to a Respect and Veneration for it; this is an Obligation which will never cease, but remain a necessary Duty in all Ages and Circumstances of the Church. Proceed we then, *See loose paper*

II. To consider what particular Conduct will acquit us of this Obligation. In general there is something lovely and endearing in every single Instance of Duty, prescribed by the Gospel: a Beauty, which the most Dissolute are forced to acknowledge, and the Libertine himself to applaud and admire. How irresistible then are the Charms of Virtue, when the Obedience is universal? when the Graces of Religion shine with an united Lustre, and no Crime can be objected to darken the Character, and fully the Perfection of the Example? But I shall content myself at present to recommend the Practice of some particular Duties, of a more especial Tendency to procure Respect to ourselves, and

and Honour to our Religion ; and those are,

First, AN extensive Love and Charity, the Bond of Peace, and Foundation of all the Comforts of a social Life. 'Tis this most Christian Grace of our Religion which softens our Passions, appeases our Resentments, and extends our Beneficence to the Miseries of our Brethren ; which inclines us to support the Needy, compassionate the Fatherless, and relieve the Tears of the Widow ; which renders us the Blessings and Ornaments of the Age in which we live, and the Veneration of those which come after. And so lovely and obliging a Disposition of Soul cannot fail of endearing both us and our Religion to the Gratitude and Affections of Men. Let the fierce and implacable Spirit of Revenge be the Character of our Enemies ; let them slander and traduce the Innocent, let them rage and persecute the Poor and the Helpless ; but let it be our Glory to be pure and peaceable, ready to forgive, and easy to be intreated ; compassionate to the Sorrows, and bountiful to the Wants of our greatest

174 *A good Life an Ornament*

greatest Enemies. By this we shall vindicate the Honour of our Religion; by this shall all Men know that we are the Disciples of *Christ*.

A SECOND Virtue I would recommend as of peculiar Efficacy to incline Men to venerable Thoughts of our Religion, is Firmness and Resolution. A Behaviour, which even in the moral Accounts of Virtue has always commanded the highest Respect from Men. And as no Institution of Life has ever furnished its Disciples with so powerful and generous Motives of Courage as the Christian, so nothing can derive so much Honour on our Religion, as on all Occasions to act up to the Spirit and Principles of it. Let a Man's Pretences to Religion be never so great, and his Conduct in other Respects be never so regular, yet if he faint in the Day of Trial, if we see him shrink from an unacceptable Duty, betray the Cause of God, and prevaricate with the most avowed Principles of his Conscience; is it not natural to suspect that there is an evil Heart of Unbelief, a secret Reserve of Infidelity at the Bottom?

Bottom? especially if he be a Man of any Eminence for his Knowledge or Station; one who is presumed to have formed his Principles upon calm and deliberate Enquiries, and to be a Master of all the Arguments that can plead for Religion: When such a one shall fall away, and act contrary to his most professed Convictions, with what Shame and Confusion must all good Men behold the Example? What Scandal must it give to the Weak, and what Triumph to the Infidel? With what Confidence will he conclude, that either our Religion wants Arguments to convince a reasonable Enquirer, or Encouragements to support its Converts in Perseverance. On the contrary, when we see even the meanest Christian stand firm in his Duty, and hold fast the Integrity of his Profession; when we see him renounce his Interest, his Pleasure, and even Life itself in Obedience to the Commands of his Religion; the most indifferent Spectator must applaud the Courage, the Honesty, and Sincerity of the Man; and confess the Power of that Institution, which can infuse so much Bravery and Spirit into

176 *A good Life an Ornament*

to the Souls of its Disciples. 'Twas the Zeal and Resolution of the first Christians; 'twas the Patience of Confessors, and the Courage of that noble Army of its Martyrs, that procured Respect and Honour to the Gospel; and prevailed more in the Conversion of the World, than either the Arguments, the Oratory, or even the Miracles of its Preachers.

A THIRD Duty, which will be always necessary to secure the Credit of our Religion, is a due Obedience to the Authority of our Superiors. It was an early Objection, and too successfully urged by the Adversaries of Christianity, that 'twas an Enemy to Civil Government: That it pretended to exempt the Servant from Obedience to his Master, and the Subject from his Prince. And as nothing could raise a greater Prejudice against any Religion, than an Imputation of Inconsistency with the Laws and Subordinations of Government, so there is no Reproach *Christ* and his Apostles are more careful to obviate than this. Thus we find our Lord on all Occasions disclaiming all Pretensions to a temporal

temporal Kingdom; commanding his Disciples to render to *Cæsar* the Obedience that was due to him: And though in Strictness he tells us he might have pleaded an Exemption from the *Jewish* Tribute required of him, yet rather than countenance the Aspersions that would attend his Refusal; he exerted his divine Power in a Miracle to pay it. And as the same Calumny pursued his Apostles, so we find them equally solicitous to clear themselves and their Religion from the Scandal of it: Inculcating the Doctrine of Subjection for Conscience Sake; and, in their own Persons, submitting to the most unjust and tyrannical Inflictions from the Heathen Tribunals. And though it was some Ages before the Jealousies of the Civil Powers were thoroughly reconciled to the Assemblies of Christians, yet we find them at length so perfectly acquitted from this Slander, than even *Julian* himself, the most implacable Enemy that ever appeared against the Gospel, reproaches his Heathen Subjects with the Fidelity of the Christians. This was the ancient, and is, I hope, yet the unforfeited Glory of our Religion.

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178 *A good Life an Ornament*

The Malice of its Adversaries has in all Ages laboured to deprive it of this Honour; to expose it to the Resentments of the Magistrate as an Encourager of Sedition; and improve the particular Miscarriages of some few, into a general Charge of Disloyalty upon the whole Church. But Wisdom will still be justified of her Children. That pure and peaceable Wisdom, which always was and always will be the Character of the Church of *Christ*, will in the End refute the Aspersions of its Enemies: And the meek, the humble, the patient Servant of *Christ* will be found the truest Friend to *Cæsar*. And,

4. LET us crown these Virtues with a prudent, affable, and courteous Behaviour towards all Men. It is indeed the inward Purity and Sincerity of the Heart, that principally recommends us to the Searcher of Spirits: But since God has also left it upon us as a Duty to render his Service amiable to others, these external Decencies and Ornaments of our Conduct, become a very important Part of our Morality. It is in these, the Visibilty and Example
of

of our Virtues will chiefly consist. The great and more observable Occasions of exercising our Courage, our Justice, or our Charity, occur but seldom: But these are of daily and constant Use, to preserve a general Benevolence, and endear our common Intercourse between one another. Without this Care, our best Actions will lose much of their Influence, and our severer Virtues be often discredited with the Appearance of Evil. But how bright and lovely does every Grace of our Religion shine, when adorned with an humble and obliging Behaviour? Beautiful as a Jewel set in Gold; which, though it adds little to the intrinsic Value, yet improves the Lustre, and attracts the Eyes and Affections of the Beholder. And therefore the Apostles of *Christ* have not failed to make it a constant Part of their Instructions to their Converts, to avoid all Unseemliness and Asperity of Carriage; to do nothing that may argue a peevish or froward Spirit: not rendring Railing for Railing; on the contrary, to be gentle and condescending: If any Man asks us to go a Mile, to go with him twain: To be modest and

180 *A good Life an Ornament*

un aspiring, in Honour preferring one another; to be tender and compassionate, to weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice. In general, to be studious of the Peace and Interests of our Neighbour, and endeavour, by an affectionate Deportment, to leave Impressions of Esteem and Benevolence on all we converse with: Whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report, if there be any Virtue, any Praise, to think of these Things. Our Duty only must be too valuable an Interest to be given up in a Compliment, or sacrificed to the Applause of Men. If indeed we thus please Men, and can be persuaded to any criminal Compliances to avoid their Resentments, or engage their Favour, we cannot also be the Servants of *Christ*. There are proper Occasions on which we may be angry without Sin. Somewhat of Warmth and Severity will become us when we rebuke the Vicious, and discountenance the Profane; and we are expressly required to appear with Zeal and Earnestness, when we are contending for our Faith. But these

to the Christian Profession. 181

these Duties may be complied with, without offending against that Gentleness prescribed by the Gospel. We may reprove the Libertine, without Rudeness or Bitterness; defend the Articles of our Faith, and resist those who oppose them, with a Meekness and Humanity, which will equally convince the World of our Affection to the Persons, and our Zeal against the Errors of our Brethren. But if passionate and unreasonable Men will, notwithstanding our best Care, be offended with us for doing our Duty, God, and all good Men, will applaud our Integrity, and Shame and Contempt will be the Portion of our Enemies. *167 does paper 6*

LET me then, in Conclusion of this Discourse, exhort you seriously to reflect on the great Engagements we are under to assert the Honour of that Religion we profess, by an exemplary Practice of the Duties I have recommended. Let me address you not only as Christians, but as Members of the purest and most Apostolick Church in the World: A Church, whose Doctrines are derived from the clear Fountains of the Scriptures; whose Polity

182 *A good Life an Ornament*

and Discipline are formed upon the most uncorrupted Models of Antiquity; which has stood unshaken by the most furious Assaults of Popery on the one hand, and Fanaticism on the other? has triumphed over all the Arguments of its Enemies, and has nothing now to contend with but their Slanders and Calumnies. The Reproach of Immorality, is indeed a Charge will always lie heaviest against an established Religion; because those who have no Religion, will generally profess themselves of that which has the Encouragement of the Law. But it is surely very unreasonable to infer any thing to the Disadvantage of any Church, from the Practice of those who are really of no Church and no Religion at all. But whatever Title we may have to this, or any other Excuse, let us rather endeavour to want none. Let us strive to vindicate the Honour of our Religion, by a pure and unspotted Obedience to the Rules and Precepts it enjoins: This will more effectually secure the Interests, and promote the Credit of it, than either the Eloquence of our Preachers, or the Authority of our Laws.

to the Christian Profession. 183

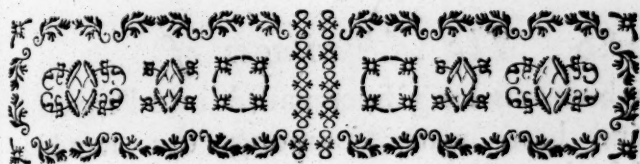
Laws. And, blessed be God, the Righteous are not so failed from the Earth, but we can still appeal to bright and numerous Examples of Virtue among us. The Number and Devotion of those who frequent our Altars, and the many great and excellent Works of Piety and Charity promoted among us, are a burning and shining Light, such an Evidence of the internal Power of our Religion on the Minds of its Disciples, as must command Reverence from all who behold it, and ought to be allowed in-Balance against those Examples, with whose Crimes our Adversaries are so ready to reproach us. But let us not content ourselves with being better than our Enemies represent us; let us go on unto Perfection, and improve in every Grace of our Religion. Let us add to our Faith Virtue, to Virtue Knowledge, to Knowledge Patience, Temperance, and Charity. Let us, by a meek and quiet Behaviour, cut off all Occasion from those who seek Occasion, that they may have whereof to accuse us. And though we have all Encouragements to hope that the evil Day of Persecution is far from us, yet

184 *A good Life an Ornament, &c.*

let us always live in such a Preparation of Mind, that if God shall at any Time call us to a Trial of our Faith, we may acquit ourselves with Courage becoming the Hope and Spirit of Christians. In sum; let the Beauty of our Religion appear in the Holiness of our Lives. Let our Virtue shine forth as the Light, and our just Dealing as the Noon-Day. Then shall our *Sion* appear fair and comely to her Lovers, and to her Enemies strong and terrible, as an Army with Banners. Then shall the Righteous resort unto her Assemblies, and even Sinners be converted unto her: And every one that is afar off, shall be induced to give Praise unto God, and seeing our good Works, to glorify our Father which is in Heaven.

To whom with the Son and Holy Ghost be ascribed, &c.

S E R-



S E R M O N X.

The Advantages of conversing with
good Men, and the Inconveni-
encies of a contrary Conduct.



PSALM cxix. 63.

*I am a Companion of all them that
fear thee, and of them that keep
thy Precepts.*

 H A T the Temper, the Senti-
ments, the Morality, and, in
general, the whole Conduct
and Figure of Men is influen-
ced by the Example and Disposition of
those they converse with, is a Reflection
which

186 *The Advantages of*

which has long since passed into Proverbs, and been ranked among the standing Maxims of human Wisdom, in all Ages and Nations of the World. And Mankind seem to act with Conviction enough of this Truth, in the Care they take to deter those whose Welfare they are concerned for from the Company of such, the Expence or Infamy of whose Vices may endanger their Fortunes or Reputation. But because the Generality of Men appear much less solicitous for the purely religious Consequences of Conversation, it is my present Design to recommend to your Imitation the Conduct which the *Psalmist* here ascribes to himself, both as it is itself a Part of Religion, and as an effectual Method to secure us in the true Profession, and encourage and improve us in the Practice of it. In order to this it will be necessary for us,

- I. To ascertain what Measure of Acquaintance or Familiarity is implied in this Notion of being a Companion. I shall then,

II. RE-

conversing with good Men. 187

II. REPRESENT to you the Advantages that will attend our conversing with good Men. And,

III. THE Dangers and Inconveniencies we are exposed to by a contrary Conduct, by being engaged in Familiarities with wicked Men.

I. THEN by being a Companion of good Men, may be meant either simply chusing Persons of Virtue and sound Religion for our Friendships and Intimacies, or assisting them in the Promotion of any pious or righteous Design: But the latter of these is so natural and almost necessary a Consequence of the former, that we may comprehend them in one View; and understand the Reflection in my Text as advising us to confine our Conversations, as far as 'tis possible, to Men of this Character: And, on the contrary, not to indulge ourselves in any Confidence, or Familiarity with impious and profane Men, but especially not to communicate with them in their Vices, nor to concur in any unjust, irreligious, or unmerciful Action, and,

and, as far as it is in our Power, to avoid all Intercourse with them, and, as the Apostle commands, from such to withdraw ourselves, Not that we can imagine ourselves prohibited all Manner of Conversation with wicked Men, for this would exclude us from performing the charitable Office of private Admonition or Instruction, the most successful and almost the only Method we can take for their Reformation. Persons of that Character generally keep themselves out of the Reach of the public Reproofs and Exhortations of the Ministry, or hear with such Inattention or Contempt, as renders them of very little Effect to them, and consequently will either not be applied to at all, or, if at all, yet without much Hopes of Success: unless we are permitted so far to converse with them, as the Discharge of this Office requires. This Duty indeed lies with special Obligations on the Ministers of the Church, who are bound to watch over every Soul in their Flock, and to be instant with them as well in private Applications, and from House to House, as in the more public Offices of Instruction.

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But since the Prepossession these Sort of Men have generally conceived against us of the Ministry, the Reproaches of Design or Impertinence, with which they are apt to treat us, give other good Christians against whom they are less prejudiced greater Probabilities of Success with them; 'tis to be hoped they will think themselves not only permitted, but obliged to this Sort of Friendship and Conversation with them.

BUT 'tis farther to be considered, in Abatement of this Restraint, that the great Mixture there is in the Business and Affairs of Life, the Nearness of Relation, or our Acquaintance with such Persons as may have these Occasions of Correspondence with wicked Men, will sometimes engage us in necessary, and frequently in accidental Conversations with them. But these we cannot reprove as criminal because they are altogether unavoidable. If we would absolutely decline the wicked, we must abandon human Society, must retire into a Desert, and, as the Apostle says, go out of the World. What we are forbid, therefore, is receiving such Persons
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into our Confidence and Intimacies, choosing their Alliance for our Friendships, or their Company for the Ordinary Entertainments of Conversation; these are Acts of Choice, and our own free Election; and to these therefore 'tis reasonable the Prohibition should extend. And even with regard to that unavoidable Correspondence with wicked Men, to which the Business or Accidents of the World may sometimes oblige us, we are certainly under thus much Restraint, not to enter into any farther Familiarity than the Occasion requires, and to take care of our Behaviour under them, lest we countenance the Sin, while we caress the Sinner.

BUT I must observe one Instance, in which we are restrained from joining with wicked Men, even in such Offices of common Life and civil Intercourse, which might otherwise be indifferent and allowable; and that is, when the Person is judicially separated from the Communion of the Church; with such an one 'tis the Apostle's express Command *no not to eat*: And the Reasons of this Prohibition are very obvious, because the Design of this Sentence

tence will in a great Measure be defeated, unless the whole Congregation concurs in the Execution of it. For neither will the Sinner be reclaimed, nor others deterred from the like Commissions, nor the Infection of the Flock be prevented, if the Criminal be permitted the same Freedom and Correspondence with Christians, as before: His Punishment will have no outward Effect, that can lead him to reflect on his Sin; and when he meets with the same Countenance and Friendship from the rest of the World as formerly, both he and those he converses with, will be encouraged to despise the Authority that inflicted it: And 'tis plain that under the Advantage of such a Reception, he has just the same Opportunity of corrupting others, as he had before. It may perhaps be imagined that his Exclusion from the Ordinances of Religion, will answer all these Purposes: But *First*, as to his corrupting others, unless he be deposed from some publick Office in the Church, he is by this Part of his Sentence deprived of no Opportunity he had before. *Secondly*, as to himself, if he be a hardened Sinner, as it must

must be supposed he is whom private and more gentle Applications could not reclaim, this Sentence only excludes him from what he had very little Regard for before: Or if this Crime was Schism or Heresy, his Punishment is no more than he voluntarily chose. Now nothing can affect him in the Nature of a Punishment, but what deprives him of something he esteems and values, and the Loss of which will render him uneasy; when therefore he finds himself avoided and neglected by his Familiars, this affects him with a Penalty the most sensible of human Nature: This, if he has any Principle of Shame left in him, will awaken him to more serious Thoughts of his Condition, and give such Considerations as are properly religious, a more easy Access, and a more lively Impression on his Mind. 'Tis therefore, I say, not only an Obedience which we owe to the Authority of our Superiors, and the express Command of an Apostle in Support of that Authority, but a Charity which is due from us to the Souls of our Brethren, thus to restrain our Conversation from an excommunicated Person, and
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by such a Behaviour, as will express Abhorrence and Detestation of his Crime; both deter others from the like Commisions, and humble him to such a Sense of his Guilt as will lead him to Repentance, and save his Spirit in the Day of the Lord *Jesus*. The Measure of our Acquaintance or Familiarity thus limited, I proceed,

II. To represent the Advantages derived on us by observing these Limitations, and confining our Conversations to good Men.

As to the religious Restraint I last mentioned, the Interdiction we are under from the Society of Persons cut off from the Church, and consequently our Confinement to such as persevere in the Terms of its Communion, since this is expressly enjoined us by a divine Command, we might assure ourselves, without further Enquiry, that the most beneficial Effects will attend our Compliance with it. But the Advantages intended in this Institution are obvious to the least Degree of Reflection: And even those I have already suggested are so great, and so naturally result from it, that nothing farther need be added to convince

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us of our Interest, as well as Duty in observing it. I shall therefore consider, in a more general View, some common Advantages we may hope for while we confine our Conversation to Men of Virtue and Religion. And,

FIRST, I would recommend this Choice as an Evidence of our own Virtue. For 'twill always be presumed, that Men associate with Persons of like Dispositions with themselves. It cannot well be imagined, how Friendship can long subsist between opposite Tempers and Inclinations: When Men are so widely different in their Sentiments and Principles, in their Pursuits and Aversions, as the Good and the Vicious, 'tis impossible but they must soon grow burdensome and uneasy to one another; those Things which are the Mirth and Pleasure of the one, provoke the Indignation and Abhorrence of the other; and under these perpetual Occasions of Disaster, Familiarity must grow cold, and each be inclined to seek his Entertainment in more agreeable Company. And accordingly 'tis found in Fact and Experience, that the
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Sentiments and Inclinations, the Virtues and Vices of Men, are what range and sort out Mankind into their several Clubs and Societies. It will therefore, I say, be always, and with Reason concluded, that he who herds with wicked Men, is himself of the same Character. Whatever Virtues may appear in him, they will be esteemed an hypocritical Imposture on the World; and in his more retired Pleasures, he will be presumed as much a Libertine as the rest of his Company; and consequently, we can by no other Conduct avoid this Appearance of Evil, and preserve the Reputation of our Virtue, but by confining our Conversations to good Men. This Argument, which dissuades an Intimacy with wicked Men from its Effects on our Reputation, may perhaps seem rather prudential than religious. But if we reflect, what Scandal we give to many weak Men, by so offensive a Conduct; how it unqualifies us for the Instruction or Reproof of others: How it corrupts our Example, and gives Countenance to the Vicious and Prophanes, we shall be convinced that this Motive is properly Christian, and ought

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to be regarded from Considerations of great Importance to Religion. But,

SECONDLY, Our associating ourselves with good Men, is not only a Proof and Evidence of our Virtue, but the most effectual Method both to retain and improve it. Our Advantage from the Conversation of good Men, may be considered more particularly with Respect to their Discourse, and their Example. *The Mind of the Righteous* (says the *Psalmist*) *will be exercised in Wisdom, and his Mouth will be talking of Judgment.* From him we shall learn, and by just Arguments be confirmed in true Principles of Faith and Morality: The Maxims that govern his Conduct, are such as equally tend to promote private and publick Happiness; and even his Mirth is bounded by Innocence and Purity; and the Sense of his own Duty will engage him to cultivate the same just Sentiments and good Dispositions in those he converses with, to instruct their Ignorance, reform their Errors, and, as the Apostle says, *minister Grace unto the Hearers.* Perhaps, indeed, the gentle Admonitions
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conversing with good Men. 197

wherewith good Men will rebuke the Imperfections of their Friends, may be uneasy to the Pride of some Tempers; but these *precious Balms* (as the *Psalmist* calls them) are Freedoms which wise and virtuous Men will esteem rather Favours than Affronts. Holy *David*, though a Prince, was sensible that his Failings and Miscarriages would make this Consequence inseparable from his chusing the Society of good Men: But yet rather than he would take Refuge with the Men that wrought Wickedness, he makes it his Request to God, that *the righteous should smite him friendly, and reprove him* *. And indeed there is no surer Argument of a good Understanding, and a Christian Disposition, than being sensible of the Friendship of a proper Reproof. But the Instructions and Reproofs of good Men can hardly fail of these beneficial Effects on those who converse with them, when we consider how they are enforced by a correspondent Example. When we find a Man prescribe nothing to us but his own constant Practice, we can have no Suspicion of Dis-

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* Psalm cxii. 6.

guise or Insincerity: He is himself what he desires us to be, and therefore gives us the greatest Security that he intends our Happiness in the Methods of Life he advises, since he pursues his own by the same.

EXAMPLE is confessed to have this Advantage over all other Methods of Instruction, that it not only teaches us our Duty, but convinces us of the Possibility of our Imitation. When we see a Man of like Passions and Weakness with ourselves, and no otherwise assisted than we either are, or may be, going before us in the Paths of Duty, it confutes all lazy Pretences of Impossibility; it reproaches our Imperfection; and if we have any Thing generous in our Temper, it shames us into Emulation. Nay, I would observe farther, that the Example of a good Man is generally speaking, the best Direction we can follow in the Performance of our Duty: The most exact Rules and Precepts are subject to be misunderstood; some Capacities at least will mistake their Meaning; and though they sincerely endeavour to obey, will act far from the Intention
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of those who delivered them. But the Example of a wise and good Man ascertains the Sense of the Precept, and shews plainly how it is to be obeyed: And the meanest Capacity, when he sees a Rule practicably applied before his Eyes, can no longer be at a Loss how 'tis to be performed. It may be observed also under this Head, that Self-Love is a very partial Interpreter. We are apt to be fond of our Opinions and Practice, and perhaps without perceiving it, to bend and accommodate the Rule in Favour to them: But when we apply it to the Actions of other Men, we judge with less Interest, and consequently with more Impartiality; whence it often happens that the Notions of Duty which we form from the Example of others, is more correct and just than we derive from the Rule itself. To these Advantages of conversing with good Examples, we must add one which I think still greater, and that is the Encouragement we receive in the Performance of our Duty. The Shame of being singular is a Weakness, which has debauched the best and most ingenuous Dispositions; but now by

a constant View of good Examples, we find that we are not alone, that we have Numbers enough on our Side to countenance us in our Profession; and especially when we see wise Men, Persons of Character and Esteem, Examples of Duty, we are convinced that Piety is no unreputable Qualification, and that we need not be ashamed of our Virtue; it will confirm our Resolution against the Railleries or Reproaches of the Prophane, and give us Courage and Confidence in our Religion.

I MIGHT farther recommend the Conversation of good Men to our Choice, from Reasons of Prudence and Discretion. As that while we confine our Intercourse to Persons of this Character, we are in no Danger of Treachery in our Friendships, of Fraud or Injustice in our Commerce; We have a Security firmer than that of Bonds and Covenants, in their Conscience and Integrity: We are assured of a ready Assistance in all our Exigencies, from a Conviction of their own Duty: We have the Satisfaction of conversing with Men, whose Passions are under Government and Discipline;

pline; not to be affronted with Trifles, nor provoked to any unreasonable Resentment; with difficulty moved, and easily appeased: Men who are just and good-natured out of Principle, in whose Conversation we are secured from the Slanders of the Malicious, the Envy of the Spiteful, the Censures of the Impertinent, and the Contempt of the Proud: And in general, since so great a Part of the Uneasiness we complain of in this World is derived on us by the Villanies and Passions of unrighteous Men, we can by no Conduct more probably secure our Happiness, than by confining our Intercourse to Men of Virtue and Religion. But my Design being chiefly to insist on the religious Advantages attending this Choice of our Acquaintance, I only mention these Considerations as a collateral Motive, and go on to engage you to it,

THIRDLY, by representing the Dangers and Inconveniencies we expose ourselves to, by being Companions of wicked Men.

EVIL Communications (says the Apostle) *corrupt good Manners*: The best resolved

solved Virtue cannot long defend its Integrity, against the continual Sollicitations of a vicious Acquaintance. As to our Principles, the natural Pride of Men will make them restless and uneasy, 'till they get their Sentiments and Opinions received by those they converse with, and, 'till this is obtained, it is not Society, but endless Wrangling and Controversy. And as to Practice, the Desire we have to endear ourselves to those we converse with, will insensibly engage us in the same Pleasures and Aversions to them: And with must be observed, as a farther Circumstance of our Danger, that the Loose and Dissolute are very industrious in communicating their Principles, and gaining Profelytes to Sin. The natural Shame and Diffidence that attends Vice, makes them zealous to encourage themselves by Numbers, and form a Party against Religion: It is with Pride they survey their Increasing Strength, and begin to think themselves a Match for Virtue. But it is with more than ordinary Triumph they corrupt a Man of pious and virtuous Principles. It sooths their Fears, and gives some Ease to their Scruples, to
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gain a Convert who seemed to have all the Conviction that Religion could afford: This they are ready to look upon as a Determination on their Side, and decisive of the Controversy between Vice and Virtue: And this is a Conquest they never fail to attempt with the greatest Application. For a virtuous Man, while he preserves that Character, is uneasy to their Conversation. They look upon him, as the wise Man describes their Sentiments, *as grievous to their Eyes to behold**, as one made to reprove their Thoughts, to upbraid them with their offending the Law, and object to their Infamy the Transgressions of their Education: And therefore they never fail of their most artful and indefatigable Address to silence this impertinent Adviser, whose Severity awes their Excesses, and restrains their Freedom. And alas! it is but too often and too easily they prevail. For tho' a well directed Conversation be one of the best Methods to secure and improve our Virtue, yet it is the Misfortune of our fallen State that this Principle acts with the greatest Force in the worst Application, and the Familiarity of wicked Men more successfully de-

* Wis. ii. 15.

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bauches, than that of good Men reforms. For it is a Work of Labour and Affiduity to form and preserve a virtuous Disposition; it is a Plant not to be raised without Culture and Management, and requires Care and Attendance to give it Vigour, and defend it from a Thousand Accidents that may make it miscarry: But Vice is the natural Growth of our Corruption; remit but our Care, and it soon roots itself, and spreads over the neglected Soil. How irresistible then must it prevail, when the Seeds of it are artfully sown, and industriously cultivated?

WHAT Power less than an uncommon Measure of divine Grace can preserve even a well inclined Temper from the Infection of a loose and profane Conversation, where Vice appears with the Advantages of Fashion and Reputation, and Virtue, on the contrary, is traduced and ridiculed? If he behaves with that Sobriety and Reserve, which his Religion requires from him; if he either reprovcs the immoral Freedoms or but refuses his Applause to the profane Mirth of his Company, he is either quarrelled with for Impertinence, or reproach-
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ed for Affectation and Singularity. And how few Instances have we of a Courage, that can stand the Shock of being the Jest of his Familiars. Even Modesty and good Manners will help to corrupt him, and good Nature itself will endanger his Virtue. In sum; what Advantages can we expect, or rather what Consequences are too terrible to be feared, from mixing in Conversations where Irreligion and Profaneness, where a Defiance of all Rules, and a Contempt of all that is holy, are the Principles, and Lewdness, Intemperance, and Vanity the Diversions of the Company; where the modest Sinner is taught to ridicule Providence, Conscience, and Duty, and dispute himself into Infidelity: His Reluctances to Disobedience will gradually wear off under these Impressions, and Sin become every Day more familiar, and less formidable: He will advance from one Degree of Wickedness and Impenitence to another, 'till at the last he becomes hardened without Remorse or Concern, and past Hopes of Recovery. Give me leave then to make some short Application of what has been offered on this Subject,

ject, to the common Occasions of Life and Practice.

IF then our Virtue and Integrity have so close a Dependance on the Choice of our Friends and Familiars; if the Society of good Men be so necessary to direct and confirm us in Duty, and the Conversation of wicked Men so destructive of our Principles and Morality; as we value the Favour of God and good Men here, and the inestimable Rewards of Duty hereafter, let us with our utmost Care make the important Choice, and let us remember that we are chusing Vice or Virtue.

THIS Caution indeed was always necessary, even in the purest and most virtuous Ages; but it becomes us to recommend it with more than ordinary Warmth and Concern, when the Numbers, the Figure, and the Insolence of wicked Men have almost established Sin as a Fashion; when every Enemy of Religion appear, openly and undisguised; when Infidelity, Schism and Heresy are esteemed Arguments of good Sense and a superior Understanding, and Vice and Prophaneness are the polite Entertainments of the World. So melancholy

choly a Prospect should inspire us with a more than ordinary Zeal to oppose some Stop to the rising Torrent, and check this overflowing of Ungodliness; and, as the most effectual Remedy that can be applied to deter others and withdraw ourselves from the Conversation of wicked Men. By this alone we shall be able to fix a Mark of Shame and Ignominy on Vice, and recover its just Honour and Esteem to Virtue. And this Conduct is the more necessary in private Christians, because it has been one deplorable Effect of these Corruptions, and the miserable Confusion of our religious Divisions, to bring the publick Discipline of the Church into a sad, and 'tis to be feared, irretrievable Decay. Good Men should be therefore the more zealous to supply this unavoidable Defect, to distinguish such Persons as the Censures of the Church (if duly executed) would exclude from their Society, by Marks of Abhorrence and Detestation: And, as far as their private Conversation reaches, excommunicate the Enemies of Virtue and Religion.

THANKS

THANKS be to God, the World is not yet so bad, that we need fear a Solitude from the Practice; the Righteous are not so failed from the Earth, but we may still find Men of Virtue and Piety enough for the Intimacies of Friendship, and the Entertainments of Conversation: Or whatever we may want in the Numbers of our Acquaintance will be abundantly made up to us in their Value. Nay even this Complaint will every Day lessen upon our Hands; the Credit and Honour we shall retrieve to Virtue by this Conduct, will irresistibly gain it Converts, and we shall have at the same Time the Satisfaction of making and enjoying good Men.

To conclude: Let neither the Power nor Quality of the Great, or the Wit of the Pleasant; let neither Interest, Vanity, nor Fear prevail with us, to court the Favour, to flatter the Vices, or applaud the Prophaneness of wicked Men. Virtue and Religion, Heaven and eternal Happiness, are not Trifles to be given up in a Compliment, or sacrificed to a Jest.

conversing with good Men. 209

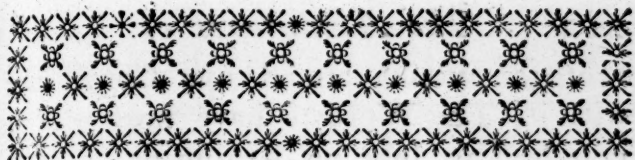
Jeſt. And if we are either aſhamed or afraid to aſſert the Cauſe of Religion, and give Countenance to the Servants of *Chriſt* here, of us ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, before his Father and the holy Angels.



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S E R M O N XI.

The great Advantages of good Discourse, and the Mischiefs of the contrary.



EPH. iv. 29.

Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is good to the Use of edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers.

IN Application of another Scripture, I endeavoured to represent the Obligations we are under to chuse good Men for our Friendships and Intimacies, what Limits this Duty admits of, and what Advan-

vantages would attend our Compliance with it. The Words I have now read to you lead us into an Argument of great Affinity with that Subject, and direct us to the Matter that should employ our common Conversations: A Direction indeed absolutely necessary to render the Choice of our Acquaintance, I before recommended, effectual to the Advantages proposed from it. The Matter of our Conversation comprehends that Share of our Words, or Actions, by which we support our common Intercourse one with another. As to Actions, because they are not expressly included in this Direction of the Apostle, I shall only observe in few Words, that they must be limited by Virtue and Innocence. Actions of civil Business are not only permitted under this Character of Innocence, but when governed by Justice and Honesty, oblige us as necessary Duties; but in Actions of pure Diversion, nothing farther is to be considered, than whether they are innocent: And with this Restriction, they are not only consistent with the Sobriety of the Gospel, but in many Cases useful, if not necessary,

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to ease our Cares, and relax our Minds from the Fatigue of intent Applications, and recruit our Spirits for a more vigorous Return to Duty. Thus Feasts have been the unproved Practice of the greatest Examples of Piety, in all Ages: and our Lord himself honoured them more than once by his Presence, and added to the Provisions of one of them by a Miracle: And as to the Amusements of Play, while they go no farther than a Diversion, it must be too great Severity absolutely to condemn them. But then these Indulgences are abused, when our Feasts, either by their Excess or too great Frequency, break in upon our Temperance: When Play, either by our too constant or too long Engagement in it, becomes like an Employment or Profession; or by our too great Intention on it, betrays us to Passion or Avarice, and rather tires than relieves our Mind. When Diversions are either in their Nature, or by such prevailing Abuses as cannot well be separated from them, rendered dangerous to our Virtue; when they expose us to the Influence of evil Examples, to the Temptation of Opportunity,

portunity, and all the Provocations that can sollicit Men to Lewdness, or Intemperance; it is not only unsafe, but sinful to join in them: With such unfruitful Works of Darkness, no virtuous or good Man will have Fellowship; but rather with Abhorrence avoid them, and with a Christian Zeal reprove them. But I go on to that Branch of Conversation which the Apostle here expressly directs, our Words and Discourse. This is a Part of our Conversation of much greater Extent, and consequently liable to more Irregularities, than our Actions either are or can be. For our Actions are confined to the present Objects, either the Entertainments of the Company, or the Persons who compose it; but our Discourse is no more confined than our Thoughts, extends to all Subjects, present or absent, past or future, and may be criminally employed on all, and therefore requires much greater Care to keep it within the Bounds of Innocence and Virtue. The Apostle in the Words of my Text has given us a general, but very full Direction for our Behaviour in this Particular. In which we observe,

I. A PRO-

I. A PROHIBITION from such Subjects or Expressions, as may shew a corrupt Disposition in ourselves, or tend to infuse it into others.

II. A POSITIVE Direction to such a Communication, as is agreeable to the Spirit of the Gospel. Such as *is good to the Use of edifying, that it may minister Grace to the Hearers.* I shall consider each of these distinctly, and then,

III. EXHORT you with the Apostle to conform to this excellent Rule, by representing the Advantages of a Conversation so directed.

I. UNDER the forbidden Head we are to rank all profane, irreligious, or immodest Discourses; all that may discover or encourage a Contempt, or even a slight Regard to Things holy: (For all these come under the Character of Blasphemy.) God and his Service, and whatsoever relates to it, are Subjects of too serious Importance

to be treated with Mirth and Levity; ought always to command our Respect, and never be mentioned without Awe and Reverence: His holy Name must not be appealed to on Trifles, but be reserved sacred for the most weighty and solemn Occasions of Life. Our Assertions and Negations should be Yea and Nay, for whatsoever is more than these, in ordinary Conversation, we are told, is Sin. Neither can filthy Communication, *i. e.* lewd or immodest Subjects or Expressions, be esteemed proper Entertainments for the Mirth of a Christian. These are Subjects which the Apostle commands should *not be so much as named among us, as becometh Saints**. And indeed, he who can treat Offences so provoking to God as Jest and Trifles, must have very little Sense of the Heinousness of them, and be under very slender Restraints from the Commission of them.

ANOTHER Sort of Discourses I would here mention as forbidden by the Apostle, are such as are injurious to our Neighbour. The former Offences indeed are so far reducible to this Head, as they tend to introduce

* Eph. v. 3.

roduce Libertinism, and corrupt the Manners of Men, and consequently injure them in their most valuable Properties, their Virtue and Religion. But the Discourses I would here more expressly dissuade, are such as affect our Neighbour with more immediate and direct, though, perhaps, not more dangerous Injuries; such as Reproaches, which provoke the Passions of the present; or Slanders, which traduce the Reputation of the absent. When we sport ourselves with the Imperfections or Misfortunes of our Brethren; when we entertain our Company with Scandal or Detraction; when we either asperse the Merit or aggravate the Faults of our Neighbour, we are guilty of an Offence against this Prohibition of the Apostle: These are Effects of those unfociable Passions, that Anger and Malice, he excludes; Liberties forbidden our Conversation, and irreconcilable to the Temper of Christianity. And to these we must add, lastly, Lying one to another; a Vice subversive of the very Ends and Design of Conversation, the most odious to the God of Truth, and equally the Contempt and Abhorrence of Men.

Men. It is true, the greatest Part of these Irregularities may seem provided against by the common Rules of Decency and good Manners, and sufficiently discouraged by the Neglect and Reproach they expose Men to; but it is evident, that in a general Corruption of Manners, these Restraints are in many Instances without Effect; the Notions of Decency are then changed, and every Vice becomes reputable and applauded, which is agreeable to the prevailing Taste and Corruption of the Age. The Laws of the Gospel therefore are the only standing immutable Rule of Morality; and the Penalties affixed by God to the Breach of those Laws, the only Guards that can effectually restrain Men within the true Bounds of Decency and Virtue. But I proceed,

II. To the positive Part of the Apostle's Direction. The Subjects that should employ our Conversation, we are told, are such as are *good to the Use of edifying*, and which may *minister Grace to the Hearers*. *Let your Speech be always with Grace, seasoned with Salt**; that is, such as may

* Col. iv. 6.

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shew forth the Grace of God dwelling in us, be an Evidence of the Soundness of our own Hearts, and be of Efficacy to preserve those we converse with from Corruption. Now we shall comply with this Precept, and may hope for these good Effects from our Discourse, when we entertain our Company with Observations either on the Mercies, or Judgments of God, or the Works of his Providence; when we encourage one another in a firm Adherence to Duty, either by the Arguments and Prospects of Religion, or by the Examples of those who have gone before us in Perseverance: When we instruct the Ignorant, direct the Doubtful, commend the Virtuous, or reprove the Sinner. In short, as God and our Duty should be always before the Eyes, and have a Share in the Thoughts and Regards of a Christian, in every Period and Hour of his Life; so they must by no Means be thrown by for so large a Proportion of our Time, as is employed in Conversation with one another. On the contrary, our Saviour has assured us that these Subjects must enter into our most familiar Intercourse,
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and has left it as a standing Rule, by which our Virtue and Grace should be judged of, *That a good Man out of the good Treasure of his Heart will bring forth good Things, and the wicked Evil; for out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh**. Where a Zeal for the Honour of God and the Happiness of Mankind is the governing Passion of a Man's Heart, the Effect of it will naturally appear in such Discourses as tend to promote these Ends; and as there is scarce any Incident of Life and Conversation, but what is capable of being applied to some Purpose of Morality or Religion: so a Mind thus disposed will immediately perceive and improve the Occasion, and be fond in engaging the Company in such Reflections, as to itself are most agreeable and entertaining.

NOT that I would exclude the common Accidents of Life, and much less the Business and Affairs of it; nay, nor even Things of a pleasant and divertive Nature, so they are modest and innocent, from being sometimes the Subject of Conversation. For as with respect to Actions,

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* Luke vi. 45.

though we are commanded to pray always, and the like; yet the Rule is not to be so understood as to forbid our Attendance on necessary Business, or some times on the Diversions of Life: So tho' this Precept of *St. Paul* for religious Discourse, be delivered without any Reserve for Business or Entertainment; yet the Necessities of human Life will oblige us to infer, that the Apostle left it to the common Sense of Mankind to make the Exception. And all we are to conclude from it is, that Virtue and Religion should be Subjects always in our View, and what we should chiefly labour to promote in every Part of our Conversation. When we are engaged on indifferent Subjects, we converse only as Men; but when the Truths or Duties of Religion are our Argument, we then appear in a higher Character; we then converse as Christians, as Men whose Conversation is in Heaven, as Persons of great and generous Pursuits, and whose Ambition is raised above the little Prospects of this World. But let us proceed,

III. To

III. To what I principally intended in this Discourse, to inforce this Exhortation of the Apostle, by observing the Advantages of a Conversation so directed.

I KNOW nothing can be more justly charged with the Slight and Contempt which is upon our Religion by some, and that Coldness and Indifference with which it is entertained by others, and in general that visible Decay of true Zeal and Piety we observe and lament in the World, than the Difuse of serious and instructive Discourse in Conversation. 'Tis a very great, and, in its Consequences, a very fatal Point gained by the Libertine, when he could not prevail on Men of Virtue and Sobriety wholly to give up their Religion, yet to persuade them to confine it to the Temple or the Closet; to limit it to set Times, to certain, and those narrow Bounds, out of which it should be improper and ridiculous. For when once Men had banished Religion from so large a Share of their Time, as is taken up in Conversation, the more solemn Returns of it not only grew burdensome and disaffecting from the Intermission;

termiffion; but the vicious and prophane Liberties, which affumed its Place in Difcource, left fuch a Stain on the Minds of Men, as indisposed them for the good Effects of our publick Affemblies; and by Degrees introduced in fome a total Difregard of all Religion, and in many debafed the Remains of it with fuch a Mixture of vicious Habits and Principles, as rendered it no better than a fuperficial Pretence, unacceptable to God, and inaffectual to the great Ends propofed in the Gofpel. The firft therefore and principal Benefit we may expect from reftoring Religion to our Converfations, is the reviving the declining Senfe, and retrieving the Power of it; and that this Conduct may be as effectual to the Reformation, as the contrary has been to the Corruption of the World.

THAT thefe are no unreafonable Hopes will appear, if we confider the peculiar Advantages by which this Application is fitted to inftitute our Ignorance, correct our Errors, and improve our Inclinations to Duty, more than either our publick Inftitutions, or the private Applications of our Retirements, which, if we exclude Religion

Religion from our Conversations, are the only Methods left for these Effects. As to publick Instructions, 'tis observable that what we hear in Conversation has this general Advantage over set Discourses, that in the latter we are apt to attend more to the Beauty and Elegance of the Composition, than to the Matter delivered; to look upon them as the Effects of Labour and Art, and to consider ourselves rather as Judges of the Skill and Abilities of the Preacher, than as receiving Directions for our Life and Actions. These are indeed great Abuses of such excellent Means of Grace and spiritual Improvement, but such as I am afraid will never wholly be removed, while Men have the common Passions and Vanities of human Nature about them: But now the Instructions we receive in Conversation, are infinitely less subject to these Abuses; we are there in no Expectation of an accurate Performance; the Person who speaks is not considered as distinguished by any Station or Office, but as upon a Level with the rest of the Company, and prepared as well to receive as to give Instruction: And as every one is permitted

permitted and expected to reply in his Turn, the Attention is unavoidably engaged to the Matter and Argument, and not diverted by fruitless Criticisms on the Skill or Address of the Orator. 'Tis to be observed farther in this Comparison, that publick Instructions are liable to be mistaken, or not understood by the Hearers. That which is plain to one Capacity, may be intricate and unintelligible to another. He has a great many Objections to propose, Doubts to be resolved, and Questions to be answered, before he can apprehend or submit to the Force of the Argument. Now in Conversation we have Opportunity of satisfying all our Scruples, of having what is obscure to us explained, what is doubtful confirmed, and being delivered from all Possibility of Error or Mistake. Neither can our private Applications to Reading or Meditation supply these Defects in our publick Instructions, but are liable to the same Inconveniencies that they are. An Author cannot answer our Objections, or be more particular in the Explication of his Meaning, than he that speaks from the Pulpit. But I go on

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to observe farther, that in one very important Part of Instruction, the reforming the Loose and Vicious, private Admonitions are without Comparison the most effectual Method ; for publick Reproofs of Sin delivered from the Pulpit, are, and for many necessary Reasons ought to be, general, though by this they lose a great deal of their Effect to particular Men ; for even well disposed Minds are contented to apply very little of them to themselves : But in private Conversations the Application may be more personal ; the Reproofs when so directed come home, and cannot be declined ; the Sinner is, as it were, taken in the Fact, and cannot avoid the Charge. Nay, if it be considered how seldom Men of wicked Principles and dissolute Lives can be prevailed on to attend our publick Assemblies, and by how many strong Prejudices their Ears are stopped, and their Hearts hardened against any Impression from what is there delivered, we can have very little Hope of reclaiming them by this Method of Instruction. But if Religion were once generally introduced into our Conversations, as they could not avoid some-

sometimes hearing their Duty and their Faults, so the Friendship of the Company would give the Application a favourable Access to their Minds, unobstructed by those Aversions which prepossesses them against the publick Ministry. To which let me here add, that if Religion were restored to its proper share in our Conversations, that secret Confidence of the Sinner that others are as wicked as himself, though better concealed, and which perhaps is the greatest Support to Infidelity, would be entirely taken off. He has been taught to ridicule our publick Assemblies, as Things only of Form and Fashion, as a Trade in the Preacher, and either Custom or Hypocrisy in his Hearers: And in these Sentiments he has been very much confirmed, by observing that at other Times they can forget their Piety, and appear as little confined in their Mirth as the rest of the Company: From hence he has been tempted to believe, that they had really as little Religion as himself, but only less Courage to own their Infidelity. But when such a Man shall observe us at all Times the same, and

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that we carry our Religion always about us, he must acquit us of Disguise and Hypocrisy, and be convinced that we are in earnest in our Profession, that our Virtue is the fixt Principle and constant Habit of our Minds. And when he sees Men of as fair Titles to Sense and Reputation as himself, behave themselves as seriously convinced of their Duty, it must shock his Infidelity, and make him suspect his Confidence, and think it worth his while to re-examine the Arguments of Religion, and consider more attentively whether he be not mistaken.

To close this Argument: In Conversation the Tempers of Men are open and accessible, their Attention is awake, and their Minds disposed to receive the strongest Impressions, and what is spoken is generally more affecting, more apposite to particular Occasions; and though less accurate, yet expressed with more Life and Spirit, than is usually found in the Compositions of the Closet. And it is Pity, Opportunities so improvable to the greatest and most important Purposes of Religion, should be either thrown away on
Trifles,

Trifles, or abused to the Promotion of Vice and Immorality; and the Things which might be so much to our Advantage, be made the Occasion of our falling. Give me leave then, in Conclusion of what I have offered, to exhort and intreat you with the Apostle, to let your Communication be agreeable to this excellent Rule he has here prescribed us.

LET us then reflect that we are Christians, that we are called by the Name of the Son of God, and baptized into an irreconcilable Enmity with Sin, the World, and the Devil; That therefore neither the Suggestions of our spiritual Enemy, nor the Insinuations of the World, should prevail with us to do or comply with any Thing, how customary soever, which may prejudice the Interest we have sworn to promote, and reflect Dishonour on our holy Profession. If either the Wit, the Figure, or the Friendship of wicked Men can engage us to assist or acquiesce in immoral Freedoms of a vicious Conversation; if either the Fear of offending, or the care of pleasing Men, can make us applaud the Lewd, or laugh with the A-

theist; if we can sit tamely and hear Fools make a Mock at Sin, affront the God whom we serve, and vilify the Religion by which we hope to be saved; be we assured that by whatever mannerly Names we may palliate the Offence, this is not Modesty but Cowardice, and a traiterous Desertion of our Allegiance to *Christ*; that 'tis crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open Shame; a Crime for which we shall one Day be told we are unworthy of him.

LET, us farther reflect, that Religion is not the Business of some Fits only and Intervals of our Life, to be taken up at certain Days and Hours, and laid aside for the rest of our Time; but a System of Precepts to be regarded in all our Conduct, to direct us in publick and private, in our Business and Diversions, in our Retirements and Conversations; and that all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions should either promote, or, at least, be consistent with our Observance of these Rules.

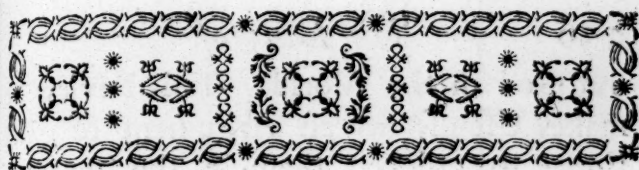
LET us remember, that God is present in all our Assemblies, that he remarks and treasures up against the Day of our Account

count every Word and Expression, and every Circumstance of our Behaviour in them. *By your Words* (says our Saviour) *you shall be justified, and by your Words you shall be condemned.* And, if every idle Word shall be strictly accounted for at the Tribunal of *Christ*, where shall the Dissolute and Profane, the Liar, the Slanderer, and the Malicious appear? And lastly, let it not be thought that Religion is too barren or too melancholy a Subject for the Entertainment of a Christian. It is indeed a Stranger to those Follies, which usually pass for the Diversions of Company. It affords nothing to flatter the corrupt Passions, amuse the Impertinence, or sport with the Vanity of Men. But the Subjects it offers us, as they are great and noble in the Theory, and every Way suited to the Dignity of our Understanding; so every Step we take in the Consideration of them, discovers so wise and so affectionate Concern in God for our Happiness, and opens such animating Views to our Faith, as must fill the Mind with a manly and rational Pleasure, a Joy unspeakable and full of Glory. And

if Discourses on these Subjects are burdensome or insipid to Men, it is a strong Suspicion their Lives are such as render Religion and Futurity uneasy Prospects to their Fears. It is no Wonder, indeed, if wicked Men prefer the light Flashes of a wanton Mirth, which for a while suspend Reflection, and hide the Sinner from himself, to such Discourses as awaken Conscience, and prophecy no Good concerning them, but only Evil continually. Or if Men of Virtue are at any Time guilty of so much Weakness, as to appear displeased with a serious and instructive Conversation, it cannot be from an Aversion to the Argument; for it is impossible they should really be offended with such Subjects, as are the great Entertainment of their Retirement: But it must proceed from too great a Concern for the Uneasiness of the Company, and want of Courage to oppose a corrupt and unreasonable Custom. But if Men had Resolution enough to attempt it, these foolish Discouragements would soon be removed. If good Men with the Liberty of an honest Zeal opposed and reprov'd all prophane

or immodest Freedoms in Conversation, Veneration and Respect would attend them, and Religion would soon improve itself into a Fashion. The Libertine would retire to the Stews, and Profaneness be confined to the Brothel. Joy, and Peace, and Esteem would bless the Dwellings of the Righteous; and the Purity and Holiness of his Conversation here, would prepare him for that heavenly Society, into which nothing unclean shall enter.





S E R M O N XII.

The great Duty of redeeming Time,
and the Danger of neglecting
it.



E P H. V. 16.

*Redeeming the Time, because the Days
are evil.*

 N the preceding Parts of this
Epistle, the Apostle reminds
the *Ephesians* of the Guilt and
Misery of their former uncon-
verted Estate, when they were Aliens from
the Common-wealth of *Israel*, dead in Tref-
passes and Sins, having no Hope, and with-
out

out God in the World. This Review he makes Use of, as an Argument of great Force to quicken them in the Improvement of those Advantages, to which the Mercy of God had called them by the Gospel. They were now the Children of Light, had a clear Prospect of Happiness and Immortality opened to their Faith, and were directed to the Duties by which they might attain it. It therefore highly concerned them to reflect, how great Obligations both the Memory of their past Misconduct, and their present Advantages laid on them to act as new Creatures, to walk with Care and Circumspection, not as Fools, who trifle away Life in a thoughtless Security, but as wise Men, who have the noblest and most important End in View, and with the greatest Attention watch every Opportunity that may be improved to the Attainment of it, and retrieve, as far as they are able, every mispent or unprofitable Hour which has slipped from them. And to strengthen the Influence of these Reflections on their past and present Time, he carries their View also forward, and observes to them, that
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the Days were evil, that the Prospect before them was full of Danger and Temptation, and therefore there was no Time to be lost in the Application he recommended, but they should immediately set about the grand Work of redeeming their Time.

THAT this comprehensive Precept may have its due Influence on us, it will be of Use to us to consider,

I. THE Extent and Import of it.

II. THE Motives which recommend it to our Observance. And,

1. THIS Precept in the first View of the Expression carries a Regard to Time past, and directs us to retrieve, as far as we are able, our former Miscarriages.

2. WITH great Care and Attention to improve the present Opportunities of Life, to set a due Value upon our Time, and not suffer it to pass unprofitably from us.

3. To be provident for the future, and
with

with wise Resolution to guard against every Thing that may lead us into Misapplications of it.

1. THIS Precept admonishes us to regain and retrieve the Time past. Time indeed, in a natural Sense, is irrecoverable, the Moment that is but just fled by us it is impossible for us to recal: But in a moral Sense we may be said to regain or redeem our Time that is past, when we correct the Mistakes of our former Conduct, and repair the Damages we may have received from it. And this, blessed be God, through the Mercies of the Gospel, is very much in our Power: By a sincere Repentance, and a more vigorous Application to Duty, the Stains we have contracted by Sin may be washed out, the Penalties we have incurred be averted from us, and the Innocence we have lost and forfeited be regained. This inestimable Privilege *Christ* has purchased for us. He has paid down the Price of this Redemption of our Time; and if we comply with the Terms of the Contract he has made for us, if by a sincere Sorrow and Contrition
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for our past Offences, and a steady Resolution of new Life, we qualify ourselves for the Favour, the Veracity of God has assured it to us. By these Applications and these only, it is in our Power to retrieve the Years we have spent in Vanity, and revive our Title to Happiness. But then this implies,

2. THAT we use our utmost Care and Diligence to improve the present Opportunities of Life, and not suffer a Day to pass unprofitably by us. For the Way to regain the past Time is, to make a double Use of the present. If he to whom ten Talents were committed has squandered away five, he is concerned to make a double Improvement of the remainder, if he would give a just Account to his Master. Every Moment must be precious in his Eyes, every Advantage it offers be attended to and cultivated, and every Danger it brings with it be guarded against with the greatest Circumspection. Should we apply this Precept only to those who are concerned to recover Time they have lost, it would doubtless extend to the whole Race of Mankind. For who is there so
righteous

righteous among us, as to be able to reflect even on one Day of his Life, in which he has done nothing which he ought not to have done, or left nothing undone which he ought to have done? But let him who is most without Concern for the Days that are past, remember, that *sufficient unto the present is the Evil thereof* *. The Duties that every Hour brings with it, the Dangers and Temptations that attend it, will minister full Employment for our greatest Vigilance: And he who makes the best Improvement of his Time, will find he has none to spare. Not that the Duties of Religion, strictly so called, require so entire a Devotion of our Time, as to allow none to be otherwise employed. The proper Business of every one's peculiar Station must have a large Allotment made to it; and he who conducts himself in the common Affairs of Life according to the Rules prescribed by Religion, is at that Time obeying God in Duties the most acceptable to him. Indeed as a great Part of our Sins consist in some Irregularities attending the ordinary

* Matt. vi. 34.

nary Pursuits of Life, so our Reformation must appear not in our laying those Employments aside, but pursuing them within the Boundaries of Duty. Nay, some Part of our time may lawfully and innocently be engaged in Actions purely divertive. Some Indulgence must be made for the Recruit and Refreshment both of Body and Mind, which under long Attention are apt to sink and grow unactive, and lose that Vigour and Chearfulness, which are necessary to fit them for Duty: And these Intermissions, if moderately used, and properly chosen, will be allowed us by God in the Account of our Time. But when Diversion is made the Business and Study of Life, when it engrosses either the whole or the greater Part of our Time, though the Actions chosen be in themselves never so innocent, yet the Excess will render them criminal: And the tenderest Reflection we can make on a Life so spent, is, that it is one great Blank, which tho' not blotted and deformed with Sin, is yet without any of those Characters of Grace or Virtue, to which the Promise of Happiness is made. But as it concerns us carefully

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fully to improve the present Time, so is it,

3. OUR Duty to be provident for the future, and wisely to guard against whatever may lead us into Misapplications of it. He who at present stands, is cautioned by the Apostle *to take heed lest he fall*; the Difficulties and Temptations which attend our Course will more easily be borne or avoided, if with prudent Foresight we arm ourselves against them. And in this Conduct of spiritual Wisdom, we shall be very much assisted by reflecting often on our past Miscarriages, by observing what are the Sins that most easily beset us, by what Illusions they have prevailed, and what Circumstances of Life have most usually led us into them. By such a Review we shall be enabled to discern and strengthen our Weaknesses with good Resolutions, and so to dispose and order our future Conversation, as may render us least exposed to the Occasions of our falling. And of equal Use will it be to look also forward, to consider what Evil the next Day may probably bring forth, and with wise Pre-
sumption

sumption of the Enemy prepare and fortify ourselves against our Conflict with him. If we thus guard our future, and thus carefully improve our present Time, we shall assuredly redeem all that we have lost, and lay up in Store a good Foundation against the Day of Necessity. I go on then,

II. To consider the Motives and Inducements which recommend this Conduct to us.

As the Precept in the first Intention of it carries a Retrospect to Time past, so the first Argument from which the Apostle recommends the Observance of it, is taken from that Review. When we reflect on our former Transgressions, that we have provoked the Author of our Being, on whose Pleasure all our Happiness depends, to whose Bounty we owe those very Faculties by the Abuse of which we have offended him; what Shame and Indignation must it raise in our Breast, what Zeal to retrieve the Miscarriage, and by the most vigorous Application to Duty to atone for our past Ingratitude? And when

we recollect the infinite Danger to which we have been exposed, that we have perhaps for many Years walked upon the Edge of a Precipice, while nothing but the slender Thread of a human Life has held us from sinking into endless Misery; with what trembling Eagerness should we seize the important Present, and labour to rescue ourselves from this State of Terror? These Reflections on our past Miscarriages the Apostle enforces,

SECONDLY, by reminding us of the present Graces and Indulgences vouchsafed us, for the Improvement of which we are accountable to God. It is an Instance of Mercy which demands the utmost Returns of the Sinner, that the divine Compassion has hitherto spared him, and not cut him off in the midst of his Iniquity; that he has given him one Day more to provide for his Salvation, and flee from the Wrath to come. But his Gratitude must be under still farther Obligations, when he reflects on the various Means of Grace that are offered him; the clear Light and Direction to Duty, which he enjoys; the noble

ble Encouragements proposed to his Obedience, the many Calls of God by his Word, by his Ministers, and by the secret Whispers of his Spirit, to close with these Overtures and be saved. How sore a Burden must it add to our Account, if we are unprofitable under so many Applications? How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation? To the Redemption of the past, by a due Improvement of the present Time, and a wise Provision for the future, we are farther persuaded by the Apostle from this Consideration, that the Days are Evil. This Reflection might perhaps, especially regard the Difficulties and Distresses, to which the early Profession of Christianity was exposed: But surely there is no Age of the Church, to which this Argument may not be applied in a very persuasive Sense. Difficulties and Temptations will never be wanting in the Prospect of Christians, which will require their greatest Care and Attention to guard against them. They have an Adversary strong and subtil, whose Malice will never cease to attempt their Subversion, against whom our utmost Pre-

caution and the most powerful Weapons in the Armory of God are represented as Defence little enough to enable us to stand. And if at the same time we consider the Number of wicked Men in the World, with what Assiduity they are ever labouring to corrupt our Religion, and ensnare our Virtue; some to pervert the Faith by Heresies, others to break the Communion of Saints by Schism, and others by libertine Principles and vicious Examples to debauch our Morals, we shall conclude that this Argument of the Apostle will at all Times deserve our Attention, and enforce the Precept it is here applied to. Our whole Life indeed in this World may properly be described under this Character of evil Days; a State of Danger, Temptation, and Infirmary; a Pilgrimage through a difficult and perilous Wilderness, which requires us to attend diligently to our Way; if we have gone wrong, to redeem the Mistake; if we have loitered, to quicken our Pace, and make the most of the present Opportunity; and at the same Time to look carefully forward, and with wise Circumspection to guard against the

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the numerous Evils which on every Side beset us.

THE several Duties implied in this Precept of redeeming our Time, and the Arguments used by the Apostle to recommend it to our Observance, I beg leave farther to enforce by these general Considerations.

I. THESE Duties cannot but appear of infinite Concern to us, when we reflect how short and uncertain our Time is. This may, perhaps, be thought so trite and obvious a Reflection, that none can want to be reminded of it: And indeed in the Affairs and Pursuits of this Life, it seems to be enough attended to. The Man intent on the World need not be persuaded to make haste to be rich, nor the Ambitious to seize the first Opportunity of advancing himself to Honour: And the great Maxim of the Libertine is, *Let us eat and drink, and enjoy as much Pleasure as we can to Day, for To-morrow we die.* And yet in the Pursuit of our immortal Interests, where it ought to have the greatest Influence, this obvious indisputable Truth is little re-

garded by us. In this Respect *the Children of this World are wiser in their Generation than the Children of Light*: Admitting their Principles to be true, that the only Portion of Man is in this Life, they act wisely; they keep their End, evil as it is, steady in View; improve every Incident to the Promotion of it, and leave nothing to be done To-morrow, which may be executed to Day in Advancement of it. But how often shall we see Men, professing themselves Christians, acknowledging the Doctrines, and valuing their Hopes in the Promises of the Gospel, and yet with strange Inconsistency putting off all Concerns for the Attainment of them from Day to Day, and from Year to Year? Every Interest or Pleasure of Life, even the most trifling Amusement is suffered to postpone the one Thing necessary. Some Time or other the Man resolves to set about it, but it is soon enough yet; he must first acquire such a Degree of Fortune, place himself in such a Station of Life, and then he will give over all farther Pursuits of this World, and make Provision for another. This also is the foolish Scheme

of the Epicure: He cannot yet disengage himself from the Company, the Mirth, and the Pleasures he has been used to; but in a few Years his Circumstances of Life will be altered, and his Desires be more easily governed, and then he will apply himself in Earnest to Works of Penitence and Religion. But when this projected Time comes, some new Illusions arise, which defer the intended Reformation a little longer. Our later Vanities succeed into the same Power and Dominion over us that the former had, and the Answer to Religion continues still the same; *Go thy Way for this Time, at a more convenient Season I will send for thee* *. But what Season can be so convenient as the present? How know we that a Day, that an Hour longer will be granted us? That our Souls shall not this Night be required from us, laden with those unpardoned Sins for which we proposed to repent even To-morrow? Methinks this is a Reflection which, if attended to, should strike Terror and Amazement into the securest Sinner; engage him with Fear and Trembling

* Acts xxiv. 25.

Trembling to lay hold on the present Moment, and not suffer it to pass without Improvement by him. Even he who has the fairest Prospect of Life before him, who rejoices in the Strength and Beauty of Youth, yet if he considers by how precarious a Tenure he holds these Advantages; that a Thousand Accidents may before the next Dawn, lay all these Glories in the Dust; and if this, very possible, Event should happen, he must immediately enter upon an eternal unalterable State of Happiness or Misery; that if he has made no Provision for this great Change, the Omission can never be repaired, the Time mis-spent never be redeemed; that he is lost and undone for ever, condemned to everlasting Anguish and Despair; can he stand against the Terror of so awaking a Reflection? Can he go calmly on, and leave so important, so irretrievable an Interest at so much Hazard and Uncertainty? When a near and certain Approach of Death sets this Prospect before us, it seldom fails of its Influence on us. With what Regret will the wounded Soul then look back on the Years it has wasted in Pursuits

Pursuits of Vanity? How will he wish to recall the precious Hours he has spent in Trifles; loitered away in idle, unprofitable Diversions? And if by due Reflection we at any Time bring this Prospect to be equally present to us, it will have the same Effect and Impression on us. And what Charm is it that can thus draw a Veil before the Eyes of Men, and hide this important Conclusion from them? What tho' the Lamp of Life be full of Oil, and burn strong, yet when we consider that a Blast of Air may blow it out, that a Shower, a Drop of Rain may extinguish it, and that it is every Moment exposed to these Accidents; shall we defer a Work on which our eternal Happiness or Misery depends, a Work which cannot be done but by this Light, in a vain Confidence of its burning down to the last Possibility of Life? *Rejoice, O young Man (says Solomon in a severe Sarcastm) and let thy Heart chear thee in the Days of thy Youth, and walk in the Ways of thy Heart, and in the Sight of thine Eyes: But know thou, that for these Things God will bring thee into Judgment*. To those surely who have gone*

* Eccles. xi. 9.

gone far and long in the Ways of Sin, we need only observe that the Day is far spent, and the Night is at Hand: That they have much Time to redeem; have already spent the fairest Part of their Portion, and therefore are concerned with the utmost Sollicitude to husband the poor Remainder. 'Tis something peculiarly shocking to see grey Hairs, and the Infirmities of Age, squandering away the last Stake of Life in Sin and Folly, without Remorse for the past, and thoughtless of the future. With whatever Delusions we may flatter our own Security, such Examples are not looked on without Terror and Concern. And I question not but each Beholder resolves to be wiser for himself, long before that Age to abstract from the World and reform, and not leave the whole Task of the Day to be wrought out at the last Hour; at least to devote that Period wholly to Religion, and the Care of Eternity. But alas! how few are prevailed on to make the proper Inference from these Observations, to reflect that 'tis not only uncertain whether they shall arrive at that Period, but uncertain also whether they shall employ that
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last Reserve better than others have done before them? That though the Day of their natural Life may continue to that Time, yet their Day of Salvation may expire before; and from these just Apprehensions, to conclude the Wisdom of attending to the present Calls of Grace, lest they be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin, and the slighted Mercy be withdrawn from them?

To this Consideration of the Shortness and Uncertainty of our Time, let us farther add the Greatness and Difficulty of the Work we have to perform in it: To subdue the Lusts and Passions of our Corruption, to correct the evil Propensities of our Nature, to possess the Soul with the Reverence and Love of God, to sow and cultivate in it the Seeds of Grace, and improve them into settled Habits of Piety and Virtue; in short, to prepare it to be a fit Inhabitant of that holy Place to which we aspire, is a Work not to be accomplished in a Moment, but to be brought to Perfection by slow and gradual Advances, through several hard and laborious Stages of Discipline. Various Mortifications must
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be undergone, many Difficulties and Obstructions conquered, many strong Attacks of the Enemy withstood, before we can arrive at a just Maturity in Religion, at the Firmness of an able and faithful Soldier of *Christ*. A Work thus difficult can never be begun too soon; 'tis the Business of our whole Life, and he who sets earliest about it, will find his Time little enough for the finishing of it: But the longer it is deferred, the more difficult it becomes: He who begins late, is not only obliged to learn to do well, to form anew the whole Disposition of his Soul, to acquire new Habits of Life, to practise Duties to which he is utterly a Stranger; but, which is a much harder Task than this, he must unlearn all his former Life; renounce Gratifications he has long been used to; divest himself of Habits which by Custom have grown up to be a Part of his Constitution, and are become a kind of second Nature to him; contend with an Enemy that has long subdued him; resist the strongest Temptations from the Violence of his own Desires, the Importunity and Reproaches of his old Companions in Sin;

Sin; and, which perhaps is not the least mortifying Part of his Discipline, he must humble himself to an Acknowledgment of his own Folly. And when we consider that all this is to be performed under the Pangs and Remorse of a wounded Conscience, and a continual Dread lest the evil Day overtake him before he has finished his Work, and made his Peace with God, how great must the Labour, how severe the Conflict be? Since then the Burden of the Work increases with the Delay, with what Persuasion should this Argument recommend to us the immediate Dispatch of it? The Question of *Nicodemus*; *Can a Man be born again when he is old?* may not improperly be asked even in that spiritual Sense meant by our Saviour. Thro' the Grace of God this is not impossible; but when we reflect how unfit we are for any weighty Performance in that unactive Part of our Life, how often the Faculties of the Mind are as much decayed as those of the Body, how many Imperfections will attend even the best we are able to do, the Diffidence we must be under whether God will accept our poor defective Services, whether

whether he will regard our Sacrifice when we have nothing to offer him but the Dregs and Refuse of Life, the Days of Loathing and Satiety, and the Years in which we have no Pleasure; what amazing Folly is it to defer the great Business of Life to a Time the least qualified for a due Performance of it? Each of these Arguments, one would think, were sufficient to recommend to us the wise Advice in my Text; but when they are collected together, and set before us in one View; when we consider how short and precarious our Time is, the Difficulty of the Work to be accomplished; that every Day both adds to the Difficulty of the Service, and takes away from our Strength to perform it; how uncertain it is whether the Years we propose to ourselves shall be indulged us; uncertain whether we shall have Power, or even Inclination to improve them better than those we now squander away; and uncertain whether God will accept so maimed and defective an Offering; and lastly, that the Stake we leave to the Hazard of so many Uncertainties, is nothing less than our eternal Salvation; when

when, I say, these important Considerations are brought together, and set before a rational Being intent on Happiness, and acknowledging the Truth of every Article, could it be imagined that a bare single Possibility should be of Weight enough to overballance them all? And yet thus it is; this is the whole Strength of the Sinner's Confidence; it is possible he may live to be old; it is possible the Grace of God may then enable him to redeem the Years he has lost, and receive him to Mercy: But how much more possible is it that all these Schemes may miscarry, and how dreadful is the Event if they do so?

WHOSO is wise will ponder these Things, will understand the Loving-kindness of the Lord, and learn to value and improve the Opportunities before him. He who has lived with the greatest Care, will find, upon a Review of his Time, that he has something to redeem; but he who has mispent much, has still a greater Concern upon him: Hard is the Task he has to perform, and short the Time in which it must be performed; yea, the greater the Work, the shorter the Time; and there-

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fore with the greater Diligence should he apply himself to the Improvement of it. In sum; he who has wasted much of his Stock, is concerned attentively to improve the little that is left; and he who has been most frugal, need not be at a Loss for the Employment of it all. May God give us Grace seriously to regard these important Truths; *so to number our Days, that we may apply our Hearts unto Wisdom*; by a prudent Management of the present Day, to retrieve the Errors of those that are past, and lay up something in Store which may support us in the evil Day, and abide with us for ever.

I BEG leave only farther to observe, how peculiarly the present holy Season suggests these Reflections to us. We are now more disengaged from the Pleasures and Diversions of Life, that the Mind may cool, and be at Leisure to attend to its domestick Concerns, to consider what Habit wants to be corrected, what Inclination to be subdued, what Weakness to be strengthened, and what Virtue to be confirmed and improved. Spiritual Recollection

on is, indeed, at all Times a Duty, and there passes not a Day, but gives us Occasion for it; but since what is left to be done at any Time, is very apt to be wholly omitted, the ancient Usage of the Church has with great Piety and Wisdom, appointed certain Seasons for this Exercise, and recommended such Restraints as may dispose us for it. The mere bodily Exercise of Abstinence, or Retirement from Pleasure, the Apostle determines to profit little, is of no other real Value in Religion than as a ministerial Caufer of moral Effects; as it recalls us from the World, gives a serious Turn to our Thoughts, and disposes to an attentive Revisal of our Conduct.

PRAY God give us Grace to improve every Call and Opportunity to these excellent Purposes, by a wise Employment of the present Time to retrieve the Errors of our past Life, and lay up in Store such good Resolutions as may strengthen us against the evil Day of Temptation, and enable us to pass the Waves of this troublesome World, that we may finally come to

260 *The Duty of, &c.*

the Land of everlasting Life, where our
Labours and our Fears shall cease, and Sin
and Sorrow shall be no more.



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S E R M O N XIII.

The Difficulties of Salvation to the
Righteous, an Argument of Fear
and Terror to Sinners.



I P E T E R IV. 18.

*If the Righteous scarcely be saved,
where shall the Ungodly and the
Sinner appear?*

A N is naturally conscious to
M himself of his Immortality;
and as the first Passion of his
Soul is a Desire of Happiness,
so he cannot be without Concern for his
Condition in that State that is to com-

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mence after this Life. These Sentiments, whether they are impressed on the Soul by God, or arise to us as obvious Reflections of our Reason, I presume to call Natural, because they have been found in all Ages, Nations, and Distinctions of Mankind. And though some few may be alledged in Exception, who have denied and argued against these Conclusions, yet they generally obtained, and have been acknowledged even by these Disputers themselves, 'till with Labour and Study they had stifled their first Convictions; and either from a Fondness to some Vices, which the Doctrine of Futurity rendered uneasy, brought themselves to doubt of it; or, out of a vain Affectation of seeing farther than other Men, pretended to disbelieve it. In the mean Time, infinitely the greater Part of Mankind have professed to act under a full Persuasion of this great Article. Before the Revelation of the Gospel, indeed, this Prospect lay much in the dark; and though Men in General believed a future State, yet they had but confused Presumptions of the Nature and Condition of it, or by what Observances

obtaining Salvation. 263

servances they might secure the Favour of God in it.

BUT our Blessed Lord has distinctly opened the Scene of Futurity to us, and directed us to such a Conduct as will infallibly render us happy in it. And one would expect the Zeal, Assiduity, and Application of Men in the Duties prescribed, should be proportioned to the Greatness of the Reward set before them, and the Certainty with which it is assured to their Faith. But far otherwise, we see a strange Inattention to this most important Prospect; and the Duties to which it should engage us, are so far from being pursued as the chief and principal Concern of Life, that by some they scarce appear to be regarded at all, and by others to be considered only as an incidental Business, something to be done when they have nothing else to do. Very few, I am persuaded, among those who profess themselves Christians, disclaim all Concern for their Souls, disown the Authority, or renounce the Expectations of the Gospel: They will tell you, if you ask them, they intend and hope to be saved by it: But by various Illusions of the

Devil they are prevailed on to shift off the Duties, and neglect the Conditions on which Salvation is promised. Some represent to themselves the Whole of Religion as consisting in a few easy Observances, and never intended to lay the least Restraint on the Business or Diversions of this Life; If they now and then appear in the Offices of Religion, and avoid some scandalous Enormities, they are as good Christians as they need be, and may employ the rest of their Time how they please. Others will go farther than these, and in their Scheme of Religion include an Indulgence for any Sin they are fond of, and fancy a regular Obedience to one Law will be a full Equivalent for their Breach of another. Or if they acknowledge Repentance, and a more strict Obedience to be one Time or other necessary, they imagine it is Time enough yet to set about these Duties, which they can dispatch when they will, in a Manner sufficient to secure their Salvation. By these Delusions Men are led on from one Stage of Life to another, in a Condition of the utmost Hazard,
and

and yet without the least Apprehension of their Danger.

THE Words of the Apostle before us cannot, one would think, be heard or read without Trembling by any Man thus careless and indolent in the Business of Religion. That they may have their due Effect in exciting your Vigilance and Attention to the great Concern of your Souls, I shall set before you the Import of them, by observing,

I. WHAT they directly affirm, that even the Righteous are scarcely saved.

II. THE Inference arising hence; how sad must be the Condition, how miserable the Prospect of the Ungodly and Sinner?

I. It is here affirmed, that even the Righteous are scarcely saved. By which Expression we are not to apprehend any Doubt, but that he *who feareth God, and worketh Righteousness*, and perseveres in the Faith and Duties of our Religion, shall certainly be saved. This the Precepts, the Promises,

Promises, the whole Covenant of the Gospel assure to us, and it is a prime Article of our Faith to believe. It is a natural Principle, that *he who cometh to God, must believe that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him* *; and he who cometh to God in the Covenant of the Gospel must believe, that, through the Merits and Intercession of his Son *Jesus Christ*, all who live according to that Covenant, shall obtain eternal Life. But the Meaning of the Apostile is, that the Religion which by this Covenant we engage ourselves to observe, is a Work of Labour and Difficulty, a Service that requires our greatest Care and Attention to the Discharge of it. The Righteous shall certainly be saved; but then the Christian Character of a righteous Man implies a constant unwearied Perseverance in many hard and painful Instances of Duty. To evince this, let us only recollect the Engagement we take upon ourselves, when we enter into Covenant with God at our Baptism. We there solemnly renounce the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and pro-

* Heb. xi. 6.

mise not to follow nor be led by them: We promise obediently to keep all God's Commandments, and to walk in the same all the Days of our Life. Our Righteousness, and all the Hopes given by the Gospel to that Character, depend on our Performance of this Stipulation. And can he who has undertaken all this, want Conviction of the Burden of his Christian Duty, and the Necessity of his utmost Vigour and Affiduity to acquit himself of it? He has renounced a World full of Snares and Temptations, offering present Ease and Satisfaction to all his Appetites. Its Honours and Interests, its Poms and Vanities, are continually passing before him, and inviting his Pursuit. He is solicited by popular Fashion and Custom, by numerous Examples of wicked Men, by their Persuasions and Importunity, by their Reproach and Laughter, by their Friendship, Relation, or Company, to indulge himself in forbidden Liberties, and take his Share in sinful Pleasures: And with what Difficulty must he prevail with himself to turn his Eye from so many alluring Objects, and harden himself against so many strong Solli-

Sollicitations; especially when we consider with what Eagerness and Impatience that Flesh and Blood he carries about him, the Lusts and Appetites of his Corruption persuade his Compliance? To mortify the boiling of Revenge upon the Provocation of an Injury; to subdue and cool the Ferment of Desire, inflamed by a near and tempting Satisfaction; in general, to restrain all our Pursuits and Aversions within the Bounds of Duty and Religion, whoever has felt the Conflict, will confess to be no slight and easy Instances of Virtue. All this our Religion requires from us, and in some Cases even more than this; not only to forego Pleasure, but to submit to Pain, Affliction, Disgrace, and even Death itself; the Desertion of Friends, and the Scorn and Insolence of Enemies. To take even joyfully the spoiling of our Goods, and the torturing of our Bodies. And when we observe that every Station and Period of human Life is exposed to some or other of these Trials, either to Temptations that provoke our Appetites, or disquiet our Fears, and that we have an Adversary, in Cunning and Strength our Superior,

perior, who watches all our Passions, and applies all these Temptations with the greatest Skill and Affiduity, to the various Tempers and Dispositions of Men, and the several Incidents of Life, we must surely acknowledge that great is the Difficulty of what we undertake, when we renounce the World, the Flesh, and the Devil: A Service that demands our constant Attention, and the most vigorous Application of all our Faculties to the Discharge of it.

BUT we must go on, and take farther into our Account the active Part of our Religion: We must not only mortify all these Passions, resist all these Temptations, and abstain from those Indulgencies to which they solicit us; but we must learn to do well, and act up to the positive Precepts of our Duty. We must be constant and devout in the Worship of our God, and ready in all Acts of Benevolence to our Neighbour. We must attend our Creator in his Courts and in our Closets, and in all those Ordinances which he has prescribed to the Observance of his Church. And in all these Duties to God, the Heart
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must be sanctified and prepared, the Affections kept steady and attentive, lest we offer the Sacrifice of Fools, and our Prayers themselves be turned into Sin.

WITH REGARD to our Neighbour, how great is the Extent and Compass of our Duty? All the various Relations of Life, in which we stand engaged to one another, as Parents or Children, Masters or Servants, Superiors, Equals, or Inferiors, exact from us particular Observances, and the Neglect of any of these, will render us criminal in the Sight of God.

IF then we stand still, and look back on all these manifold Obligations of the Christian Life, even as drawn up in this short Abstract; if we consider to how many and how dangerous Enemies our Weakness is continually exposed, and in how vast a Multiplicity the Duties we owe to the Honour and Service of God, the Welfare of our Neighbour, and the Instruction and Discipline of our own Souls beset us round, and require our Attendance, we cannot but conclude, that the Righteousness arising from the Observance of these Duties, cannot be attained without great Labour, and

the most diligent Application. That Religion is not the slight and easy Thing some would make it, but a Warfare in which we must always be on our Guard with our Armour about us, that *having done all, we may be able to stand*, to repel the Enemy, and execute the Commands of our great Captain, and intitle ourselves to his Favour and Approbation. Far from disputing the Assertion of the Apostle, that the Righteous are not without Difficulty saved, we shall rather be tempted, from such a View of Religion, to doubt the Possibility of any one's Salvation. Did God indeed insist on a sinless and unerring Observance of all this Multiplicity of Duties, had the Christian Dispensation provided no Remedy for our Lapses, made no Indulgence to our Infirmities, we might cry out with *Balaam, Alas! who should live, if God did this?* * It were easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a Man, on these Terms, to enter into the Kingdom of God. But, blessed be the Mercies of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who has purchased for us Terms
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* Numb. xxiv. 23.

of Reconciliation, who will accept of Sincerity instead of Perfection, and has made our Repentance effectual to Salvation. But then it must be remembered, that this Sincerity implies our honest and diligent Endeavours to do the utmost in our Power. Single Acts of Transgression will, through Weakness, Surprise, and the sudden Ferment of our Passions, be unavoidable to the best guarded among us; But these, though they wound the Soul, and require our Humiliation before God, yet do not forfeit our regenerate State, or exclude us from the Number of the Righteous. But no Indulgence to any Habit of Sin, can consist with that Character; for he who thus sins, does in Effect deny the Obligation of the Law he transgresses, and consequently disowns the Authority of God, who enjoins it: And he who thus *offends in one Point*, is justly reputed *guilty of all*. He is not barely an Offender, but a Rebel, who will not have *Christ* to rule over him. In Sum, the Gospel, considered as a Law, prescribes every Virtue to our Conduct under the Condition, *This do and thou shalt live*; and forbids every Sin under the Penalty

naity of Exclusion from the Kingdom of God: But as a Covenant, through the Merits and Mediation of *Christ*, it accepts of our sincere Applications to obey instead of exact Obedience: His Blood will atone for our Imperfection, and his Righteousness will be imputed in Supplement to what is lacking in ours. But still our Obligation remains to obey every Law to the utmost of our Power; this is insisted on as essential to Gospel Righteousness, and our Weakness is so far from rendering the Burden of our Duty lighter to us, that it manifestly adds to the Weight of it; and is itself an Argument, the Righteous are not without great Difficulty saved.

AND if this be the Case of the Righteous, we must hence be led to reflect,

II. How sad must be the Condition, how terrible the Prospect of the Ungodly and Sinner.

OF what Character the Sinner here meant is, it concerns us to enquire: For all Men are Sinners; the most righteous among us must confess ourselves to come under that Denomination: But, as I ob-

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served, Sins of mere Ignorance or Infirmit^y, do not exclude us from Gospel Righteousness. The Sinner here intended then is, as the Word joined with it explains it, the ungodly Sinner: He who either forgets or defies God, who lives without any or a very slight Regard to Religion; he who neglects the Worship of God, profanes his Sabbaths, and walks not in his Ordinances, but gives himself up to a lawless Pursuit of the Interests or Pleasures of the World; and perhaps ridicules all who are toiling in the narrow Paths of Duty, and with Fear and Trembling apply themselves to work out their Salvation: Or, if he does not go quite so far as this, but is regular in some Respects, yet indulges himself in the Habitual avowed Practice of some known Sin, whether it be the Commission of something which God has forbidden, or the Omission of something which he has commanded. These are voluntary presumptuous Sins, and the Persons guilty of them are properly the ungodly Sinners here described. Now though God in the Gospel of his Son has called all Sinners to Repentance, and, on the Performance of
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that Condition, has excluded none from his Pardon ; nay, and has promised his Grace to assist them in that Duty, yet how difficultly is a Man, thus *hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin**, reclaimed from it ? How hardly is his Will brought to change all its Desires and Aversions, to renounce those Gratifications in which he has been long used to place his Happiness ? And if by the Grace of God he can be induced to attempt this great Change, with what Labour and Conflict must he accomplish it ; How many hard and severe Stages of Discipline must he pass through, before he can subdue the Reluctances of his Corruption ? What Pangs and Convulsions must he undergo in cutting off a right Hand, and plucking out a right Eye, in parting with those Sins which by long Habit and Familiarity are become a second and acquired Sort of Nature to him ? How must the Wounds of Conscience smart for what is past ; and how must he tremble for fear the Day of Vengeance should overtake him, before he has finished his Work, and made his Peace

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* Heb. xiii. 12.

with God? and how slowly must Hope revive, and enable him to look up to his Father which is in Heaven with the Confidence of a Son? Thus hardly is even the penitent Sinner saved; thus difficult is that Duty by which alone he can be reconciled to his Creator, and entitled to the Mercies of the Gospel. And yet unless this hard and difficult Service be performed, he is lost and undone for ever. Let him not flatter himself that on any other Terms the Merits of *Christ*, and the Compassion of God, will be extended to him. God has declared that he will judge every Man according to his Works; to them who, by patient Continuance in well-doing, endure through the Heat and Burden of the Day, he will give the Reward of their Labour. Neither from them whom he has called later in the Day, after a long Course of Sin and Forgetfulness of God, will he withhold his Mercy. Great, indeed, is the Work they have to do, and short the Time in which it must be performed; but if with double Diligence they labour to retrieve the Hours they have lost, they shall be saved, though through a Service of great Difficulty,

ficulty, and like a Brand plucked out of the Fire. But to them who presumptuously go on in Sin, despising the Calls, and neglecting the Means of Grace, there remains nothing but Tribulation and Anguish, and a terrible looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation, from the Justice of God.

CONSIDER this, ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away and there be none to deliver.*

YEA, let us all consider, and in a serious Application of what this Scripture offers to us, remember and be convinced that Religion is no trifling Concern, to be performed in any careless and superficial Manner; an Employment designed only to fill up some idle Vacancies of Life; but the great Business for which we came into the World; A Rule that extends itself to every Part of our Conduct publick or private, and in many Instances commands us to oppose the whole Torrent of our Passions, and restrain the most importunate Appetites of our Nature. As the Extent of the Service thereof obliges our constant Attention, so the Difficulties of it require all

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* Psalm l. 22.

our Strength and all our Might, the utmost Application of all our Powers. Even the most perfect among us, who have their Passions in the best Discipline, who have overcome the first and hardest Struggles with their Corruption, and are arrived to a State of Pleasure and Delight in the Paths of Obedience, are yet obliged to be constantly on their Guard ; have many Temptations to subdue, many Conflicts with those Enemies which war against the Soul, and many Failings and Lapses to lament and recover ; and find upon the whole that they have enough to do to preserve a Conscience void of Offence, and keep themselves in a due Preparation to meet their Judge, *And give an Account of their Stewardship.* But how much more has the habitual Sinner to do, if he intends to escape the Damnation to come ? What Labours must he pass through ? What Agonies and Distractions of Soul must he endure ? What Difficulties overcome, before he can cleanse himself from the Pollutions of Sin, and be a fit Inhabitant of that holy Place, where no unclean Thing shall enter ?

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LET us then all live in a constant and serious Expectation of that Day, when we must appear before the Judge of Heaven and Earth. Let the Righteous persevere with Patience, and go on abounding in the Work of the Lord, supported with this Consolation, that their Labour shall not be in vain. And let the Sinner tremble to think through what Difficulties he must escape, and set himself immediately with all his Heart, and with all his Soul, to correct the Evil of his Ways, and bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance, lest the Night overtake him when none can work, and he be shut out for ever to a fruitless Sorrow and Repentance in Hell.

How, alas! will he appear in that awful Day, when even the Failings and Miscarriages of the Righteous shall not be concealed, though the Mercy of God be magnified in their Pardon? With what Confusion will he hear all his unrepented Sins produced before Men and Angels, and even the mild and merciful *Jesus* pronounce that dreadful irreversible Sentence,

280 *The Difficulties of, &c.*

*Go ye cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared
for the Devil and his Angels*.*

*God of his infinite Mercy give us Grace
to rescue ourselves from that Scene
of Astonishment and Despair, and
grant, &c.*

* Matth. xxv. 41.



S E R.

S E R M O N XIV.

The Scripture Doctrine of Regeneration, or a New Creature explained.

2 COR. V. 17. former Part.

If any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature.

ALL the Privileges of the Gospel relating to our present State, are comprehended in the Promise of the Holy Spirit, who regenerates and sanctifies all the elect People of God. The Effects of this Promise, every good Man

begin at Page 294

Man feels and experiences in the Comforts, Assistances, and Direction he receives from him : Neither will any true Christian deny that it is he works in us both to will and to do, that without him we cannot so much as think a good thought, that it is he who enlightens our Understandings, corrects our Wills, and enables us to subdue our Affections to the Law of God. By these Effects and Operations of the Holy Spirit, the Man is so much altered from what he was in his corrupt State, that he is said in my Text to be a *new Creature*. And in other Places to be regenerated, born anew, to have killed or crucified the old Man, and to have a new Man raised up in him. From which Expressions some have conceived and taught, that in this Work of the Holy Spirit, on every sincere Convert of the Gospel, there is something literally killed and destroyed in him, and an Act of real new Creation exerted by God ; a new Being produced by his Almighty Power, and raised up in him. Now this Notion might be let alone and despised as a Piece of harmless unintelligible Enthusiasm, if no evil Consequence to the Faith or Practice

tice of Christians had followed from it. But when it is farther inferred, that Man in the Work of his Conversion, in receiving or obeying the Gospel, is merely passive, contributes no more, and can contribute no more than he did to his natural Birth or preceding Creation, or than he shall do to his Resurrection from the Dead at the last Day : The obvious and natural Consequence hence is, that it is to no Purpose for any Man to labour and apply himself to the Works of Conversion, to convince his Faith by attending to the Evidences of the Gospel, or to regulate his Affections and Actions by the Laws of it. He has nothing to do but to sit still, and wait 'till this Almighty creating Spirit comes, and irresistibly infuses this new Principle into him. A Doctrine which so manifestly tends to discourage the Endeavours of Men, to introduce a lazy Inactivity and Neglect of the Ordinary Means of Grace, and even to quench the Spirit ; and suggests such an Excuse for all Sin and Infidelity, if it be false, as it certainly is, cannot but require our utmost Zeal in opposing

posing and refuting it. I shall therefore endeavour,

I. To shew that this Doctrine cannot be the proper Exposition of my Text, nor of any other Scripture whose Authority may be pretended for it.

II. I SHALL offer and assert what I think the true Meaning of this and the like Expressions.

III. I SHALL observe what Sentiments and Duties this Scripture, in its true Import, ought to suggest to us.

AND I. I am to shew that this Doctrine cannot be the proper Exposition of my Text, nor of any other Scripture whose Authority may be pretended for it.

THE Scriptures being acknowledged to be the Word of God, and therefore infallibly true in every Part of them, we are assured,

I. THAT no Proposition contradicting any evident Truth, natural or moral, can be the intended Sense of them. For we
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rationality may and ought rather to reject any Pretensions to a divine Revelation, however supported, than believe that God can affirm to us an evident Falshood,

2. THAT where two Propositions contradict one another, one of them must be false, and consequently cannot be affirmed by God : When therefore a Sense of Scripture is given which contradicts another Scripture, one of the Places must be misunderstood. And, as a Corollary, hence I add,

3. THAT where the Expression in one such Place is plain, and the Sense affixed to it agreeable to the proper Force of the Words, and no negative Objection requires us to depart from it ; and the Expression in the other is figurative or allusive, and the Doctrine deduced from it liable to great Objections, 'tis reasonable in this latter Place to restrain the Extent of the Figure and Allusion, to a Consistency with the plain Affirmations of the former.

LET us then apply these Rules to the Scripture in question before us : I say then,

First, THAT the Exposition which I reject offers us a Doctrine irreconcilable to those Attributes

Attributes which the natural Idea of God implies, viz. that Man is purely passive in the Work of his Conversion to God, contributes nothing to it by any Endeavours of his own, but only submits to an irresistible Act of God. Some of the first Attributes which occur to us in the divine Idea, are perfect Justice, and perfect Goodness: Whatsoever Doctrine represents God as unjust or unmerciful, cannot be from God, because it contradicts a manifest Truth, and indeed subverts the very Foundation of Religion. And for the same Reason we cannot admit such a Doctrine to be the intended Sense of any Book, or Words which we acknowledge to be a divine Revelation. Now if Man is purely passive in his Conversion and Regeneration; if, as this Doctrine supposes, no Man can be converted but by such a new Creation, such an over-powering Work of the Spirit as no Man can resist, then all Men are equally capable of being converted; for there can be no Difference in the Subjects, where the Application is almighty and irresistible, as in Creation; and consequently, according to this Doctrine, it must

must be resolved wholly into the absolute irrelative Will of God, that some to whom the Means of Conversion are offered, are converted and saved, and others perish in Unconversion. But how can this be reconciled to divine Justice; Can it be just in God to condemn a Man for not being converted, when it was impossible for him to be so? For not being new created, when he alone could new create him, and would not? Much less can this Doctrine consist with the perfect Mercy and Goodness of the Divine Nature. Can Goodness, perfect Goodness, condemn his Creatures to eternal Misery, for not complying with Conditions which he knows it impossible for them to comply with? Surely we can hardly draw a more consummate Image of Cruelty than this Doctrine ascribes to God, which represents him as calling to these poor devoted helpless Creatures, pretending the greatest Concern and Compassion for them, offering them Terms, and prescribing Means of attaining eternal Happiness, though he knows at the same Time that 'tis impossible for them to comply with those Terms, or use those Means,
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without such an irresistible Operation of his Spirit as he resolves to with-hold from them. This is representing God not only as unjust and cruel, but as solemnly sporting himself with the Misery of his Creatures. If this Doctrine gives us the true and proper Sense of these Scriptures, this is the Image in which God must appear to us, an Image repugnant to the natural Idea of the Deity; and therefore we may with Assurance conclude that this cannot be the Meaning of them. But,

Secondly, THIS Doctrine is also manifestly inconsistent with the plain Declarations of God in other Scriptures, and therefore cannot be admitted to be the Sense of these. He frequently professes that he has no Pleasure in the Death of him that dies, and that he would have all Men to be saved. He calls upon the Sinners to turn themselves and live. He tells us that he has set before us Life and Death, and referred it to our own Election, which we will chuse. He prescribes Laws and Ordinances, and pronounces, *This do, and thou shalt live*. And wherever we find our own Abilities too weak for the Performance, he assures

assures us of the Assistance of his Holy Spirit. *Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.* Is God sincere in all these Declarations? Or is he only mocking the Weakness of his Creatures? This must be his Character, if we believe that at the same Time he knows it is, and resolves it should be impossible, for those he thus addresses, to comply with the Overtures he makes to them. Shall we thus conceive of a wise, a just, and a good God? Shall we ascribe to him the Levity of forgetting himself, and at other Times teaching us a Doctrine contradictory to all these gracious Professions? God forbid! yea, let God be true, and every Man a Liar. When we hear him in express Terms affirming, that every Man shall be judged according to his own Works*, and receive according to his Deeds, can we doubt but there is a Sense in which the Works of every Man, good as well as bad, are properly his own? When our blessed Lord asks †, *Why do ye not of yourselves judge that which is right?* does not the Question necessarily imply,

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* John v. 29. Rev. xx. 13. † Luke xii. 57

290 *The Scripture Doctrine*

that we have in ourselves a Power of judging what is right ? Nay, does not every Precept, Exhortation, or Command of Scripture, suppose these Faculties in us ? To what Purpose, for Instance, did our Lord preach and offer the Motives of Conversion to those who heard him, if they had no Power to discern their Force, or comply with them ? God is able, indeed, out of Stones to raise up Children unto *Abraham*. But would infinite Wisdom use Arguments and rational Persuasions to these Stones ? Would he encourage their Faith by Promises of Reward, and threaten their Infidelity with his severest Resentments ? Would he thus address Beings which were perfectly passive, and could be nothing else but what he by an Almighty irresistible Act must make them ? And what is yet more unaccountable, would he complain of their resisting his Omnipotence, and lament over their Infidelity, in those Expressions of Regret and Disappointment, *How often would I have gathered thee under my Wings, and thou wouldst not * ?* Nothing is more evident than the Force and Import of

* Matth. xxiii.

of these Scriptures, and nothing more contrary to the Conclusions I am opposing. Either therefore these Scriptures, and those whose Authority is pretended for these Conclusions, contradict one another, which cannot be supposed of a divine Revelation ; or else we must find a Sense in which they are reconcileable, which can only be done by assigning some other Exposition to one of them. And when the Doctrine affirmed by one, is the plain and necessary Import of the Words, a Doctrine without any Objection from Reason, agreeable to the natural Sentiments and Perceptions of every one's own Mind ; and the Expression in the other manifestly figurative, the Doctrine raised from them shocking to Reason, repugnant to the Idea of God, and in it's Consequences subversive of all Religion ; in which is it most reasonable to suspect the Mistake ? Surely in the Exposition of the latter. And if the Expression in these figurative Places are capable of any Sense free from these Absurdities, it ought without any Hesitation to be admitted : Such a Sense I am to endeavour,

II. To propose and assert,

THAT the Expressions of *being born again**, *having a new Man raised up in us*†, and in my Text, of *being a new Creature*, are figurative, I have affirmed, and think it cannot be disputed; for that is a figurative Expression, where the Words are used in a different Sense from what they signify in their first and ordinary Intention. Now it is plain that he who is converted from a State of Sin and Death by the Preaching or Application of the Gospel, is not born again, raised from the Dead, or created a-new, in the first and ordinary Sense of those Words; they must therefore be understood only in a Sense of Resemblance and Analogy.

If it be said, that the new Creation here asserted, is of a Principle, a new Spirit which is infused into and actuates the Man, I observe,

I. THAT the Expressions will not bear this Construction: For it is said, that the Man, the same Man is born again, is a new Creature, &c. The Man therefore is the Sub-

* John iii. 3. 1 Pet. i. 23. † Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10.

Subject of whom this new Creation, whatever it means, is affirmed. Now it is evident the converted Man is personally the same he was before, and is neither born nor created a-new in a proper literal Sense. I would ask,

2. WHAT is this Spirit, this Principle which is supposed to be created? All the Effects which this Principle is said to produce, are in Scripture ascribed to the Holy Ghost: It is he who guides, sanctifies, and comforts the Elect, and works in them *both to will and to do, according to the good Pleasure of God* *. And the human Nature is certainly a Subject very susceptible of these Operations.

SINCE this new Creation and all the Effects of it are in Scripture ascribed to the Holy Ghost, and it is plainly affirmed that it is the Man who is the new Creature; and it is evident to common Sense that the Man is not in a literal Propriety new created, the Expression is manifestly figurative, and the natural and obvious Sense that arises to us from it is, that by the Influence of the Holy Ghost, a great moral

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* Phil. ii. 13.

294 *The Scripture Doctrine.*

Alteration is produced in him. And what we are to understand by them, is plainly this, That the Fall of *Adam* having derived on human Nature an universal Corruption of all our Faculties, on the Understanding a Darknefs and Indisposition to acknowledge spiritual Truths, on the Will and Affections a violent Bent and Propensity to Evil; our blessed Lord, who was manifested in the Flesh to destroy or undo this Work of the Devil on our Nature, has promised to all who with a sincere Faith embrace his Gospel, and are Partakers of the Seals of that holy Covenant, that he will by the powerful Assistances of his Holy Spirit raise them up to a Capacity of discerning his saving Truth, enable them to mortify every corrupt Affection, and to attain such Measures of Holiness and Virtue, as he will accept and reward. Now the Change is so great, in this Restoration of the Man from a State of spiritual Darknefs to a capacity of perceiving divine Truth, from a Life of Sense and Passion to the Love of Holiness and Purity, and a Submission of all his Appetites to the Will of God, that the most exalted

alted Figures of Speech have been chosen by the Holy Ghost to represent it to our Conceptions and Gratitude : It is like a new Creation, a second Birth, a being raised again from the Dead. And agreeably it has hence ordinarily obtained in common Language, when a Man is reformed from a Course of Vice and Irreligion, to a Life of Virtue and Piety, to say he is become a *new Man*, or a *new Creature*, From these sublime Images we truly collect the greatness of the Work wrought in us, and the Necessity of the divine Concurrence to the Production of it : We could no more effect this Change by our own unassisted Activity, than we could create ourselves, or rise again to Life after we were dead. But the Analogy in these, as in other figurative Expressions, will not hold in all Circumstances, and may be carried too far in Application. Thus in the present Case, when from these Similitudes it is inferred that Man, in the Work of his Regeneration or Conversion, is as purely passive as he is in the Instances alluded to, the Resemblance is manifestly overstrained, and carries to a Doctrine (which as I

have observed) can neither be reconciled to Reason, Sense, or the plain Declarations of other Scriptures. We acknowledge it then to be implied in these Expressions, that in the Regeneration or Conversion of a Man, the greatest moral Change is wrought in him ; that the Influences of the Holy Spirit are a Cause, without which this Change could not be effected, and therefore it ought principally to be ascribed to him. It is he points out to him the Way of Life, enlivens his Affections towards it, strengthens his Weaknesses, restores his Lapses, and enables him to walk and persevere in it. Take away this Assistance, and he relapses into a state of Darkness and Corruption. But then we say that he co-operates with Grace, and by the Strength he receives from this Assistance, is enabled to will and to do according to God's good Pleasure.

THE Manner indeed, the special Acts and Impressions by which the divine Spirit introduces this Change, and how far human Liberty co-operates with it, are Subjects beyond our Reach and Comprehension, and not discovered to us by Revelation.

tion. Our Lord compares this Work of the Spirit to the Wind : We hear the Sound thereof, and perceive its Effects, and are equally assured they proceed from it, whether we can explain the physical Process of the Operation or not. In like manner the Change wrought in a Man by Conversion is manifest and certain, and Revelation assures us that it is wrought by the Spirit of God ; but how we cannot tell : We acknowledge the Effect, though we cannot explain the Operation of the Cause. At the same Time we are assured (as I have said) by Sense, by Reason, by the Attributes of God, and by the whole Tenor of Scripture, that it is not by an irresistible Operation ; that we are not merely passive in this Work of Grace ; that God addresses us as rational Creatures, and requires a voluntary Application of our Faculties to his Service.

THE original Powers of our Nature still remain with us though grievously weakened and impaired by the Fall. A Thirst after Truth, and a desire of Good, are Principles which still act with a great and universal Force. The Understanding, indeed,

298 *The Scripture Doctrine*

deed, is dim, and cannot by its natural Light discover spiritual Truths ; and the Corruption of our Will and Affections renders them tasteless and insipid to us. The Defect of Light God supplies by a distinct Proposal of these Truths in the Gospel: His Grace strengthens our Faculties to a Capacity of discerning them, and removes the Defect of Inclination by taking off our natural Deadness and Disaffection towards them. The Proposal of these Truths is wholly from God ; and we conclude from his Goodness, and Justice, and his Veracity in the Professions of his Word, that all to whom they are proposed are by his Grace sufficiently moved to attend and assent to them : Sufficiently, I say, but not irresistibly ; for if all were irresistibly moved, all would embrace them ; and if none were sufficiently moved, none would embrace them ; and if they only could embrace them who are irresistibly moved, then they who are not so moved, could be guilty of no crime in rejecting them. But when God has by a sufficient Measure of Grace supplied the natural Corruption of our Faculties, he then leaves us to act
freely

freely in embracing or rejecting the Truths he proposes to us.

So likewise God in the Gospel points out to us our proper Good, and directs to the Means by which we may attain it. He sets before us Life and Death, and represents to us the Motives which ought to engage us to make a wise Choice, and assists us with a Measure of Grace sufficient to over-balance the corrupt Propensity of the Will and Affections to Evil: But then he leaves us to chuse with the Liberty of reasonable Beings: They who comply with his Grace, comply with it freely; and they who reject it, do also freely reject it.

Thus, then, I understand the new Creation asserted in my Text. God by his Grace supplies those Inabilities and Aversions from spiritual Truth and spiritual Good, which our Faculties had contracted by the Fall; This is a great Change, a great Restoration of our Nature: Neither can any Expressions give us too high Conceptions of the Power, Mercy, and Goodness of our Creator and Redeemer in effecting this for us. But then this implies no new Creation, no Production of any
Faculties

Faculties in us, but only a Restoration of the Decays, a removal of Obstructions from those with which we were created. Thus restored by the Grace of God thro' *Christ*, he leaves us to act freely, without any irresistible Force upon our Wills : He proposes to us our Duty, with the strongest Inducements to comply with it, that can be offered to a reasonable Nature ; and if we miscarry under these Advantages, the Fault is wholly in ourselves.

As the Exposition I have given of this Scripture, makes a full Acknowledgment of the Power of God, and the Necessity of his Concurrence to our Regeneration and Conversion ; so 'tis agreeable to the Attributes of the divine Nature, to the necessary Import of other Scriptures, and to the clear and evident Perceptions of every Man who observes what passes in his own Mind, and therefore it may safely be admitted by us. And since the Sense I oppose, is attended with such gross irreconcilable Absurdities, I presume I need not offer any Thing farther in Support of one, or in Disproof of the other. I proceed then,

III. To

III. To observe what Sentiments and Duties this Scripture in its true Import ought to suggest to us.

THE first Sentiment that arises hence, is, a Conviction of the deplorable State of Nature to which Sin had reduced us; a weak, ignorant Creature, Alien from God and Goodness, and a Prey to the great Destroyer. In Man naturally dwelleth no good Thing, but the Imaginations of his Heart are only evil continually. But then we are here taught, and with humble Gratitude are bound to acknowledge, whence our Strength and our Redemption come: That 'tis God who by his Grace purchased for us by *Christ*, and communicated to us by his Spirit, lightens our Darkeness, out of Weakness makes us strong, able to contend with those Enemies who war against the Soul, and subdue the Reluctances of our own Corruption. Let him therefore who glories, glory in the Lord. To him let us ascribe the Merit and Praise of all our Services; and with humble Supplication intreat this necessary Assistance, that by his renewing, preventing, and supporting

porting Grace, he would lead us from Strength to Strength, 'till we come unto the perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Statute of Fulness in *Christ*. But then it is to be remembered,

Secondly, THAT thus renewed, thus assisted, God demands a voluntary Service from us : Without this inspired Strength indeed, we could do nothing, but by it we are raised to a Capacity of turning to God, and performing such an Obedience as he requires. We are restored to the Liberty of reasonable Beings, and may either quench the Spirit, resist his Grace, and harden our Hearts against his Impressions ; or we may attend to his holy Motions, follow the Trace of Light he opens to us, and pursue the Paths of Duty and Happiness to which he invites us. Our Ability is from God, but the Neglect of improving that Ability to its proper Ends, is from ourselves, and the fatal Consequences that will attend that Neglect, the Result of our own Choice. God has done all for us that the tenderest Father could do for his Children, the most indulgent Creator for the Work of his Hands. Through the Mediation of *Christ*
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he pardons our original Apostasy, supplies by Grace the Defects of our Corruption, and puts in our Power to chuse and obtain eternal Salvation : More than this neither will infinite Goodness require, nor infinite Justice permit to be done for us. It is our Part and Duty to co-operate with this Grace, vigorously to exert those Powers, and act up to those Advantages to which it restores us. He has given Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lamé : He shews us the Way of Life, and persuades and encourages us to walk in it, and promises to accompany us through all the Stages of our Passage, with Supports equal to the Difficulties that may attend us. If we are not wanting to ourselves, if we diligently use and improve the Abilities he has given us, and is ready at all Times to afford us, 'tis in our Power to run the Race that is set before us, and so to run as to obtain. But if we will sit down sullen and unactive, in Expectation that God should do all, and irresistibly carry us to our Journey's End, we shall find ourselves miserably deceived in the Event. Grace is not intended to excuse our Labour, but to qualify

304 *The Scripture Doctrine*

lily us for it, and consequently to oblige us to it. And agreeably the Apostle observes to the *Philippians*, that God's working in them *both to will and to do* *, was so far from excusing their own Applications, or encouraging them to presume on their Security, that he assigns it as the very Reason for which they ought to work out their own Salvation with Fear and Trembling. His Grace is a Talent committed to us, and if we neglect to employ it in Use and Action, it will not only be taken from us, but the abused Favour will be imputed, and increase our Damnation.

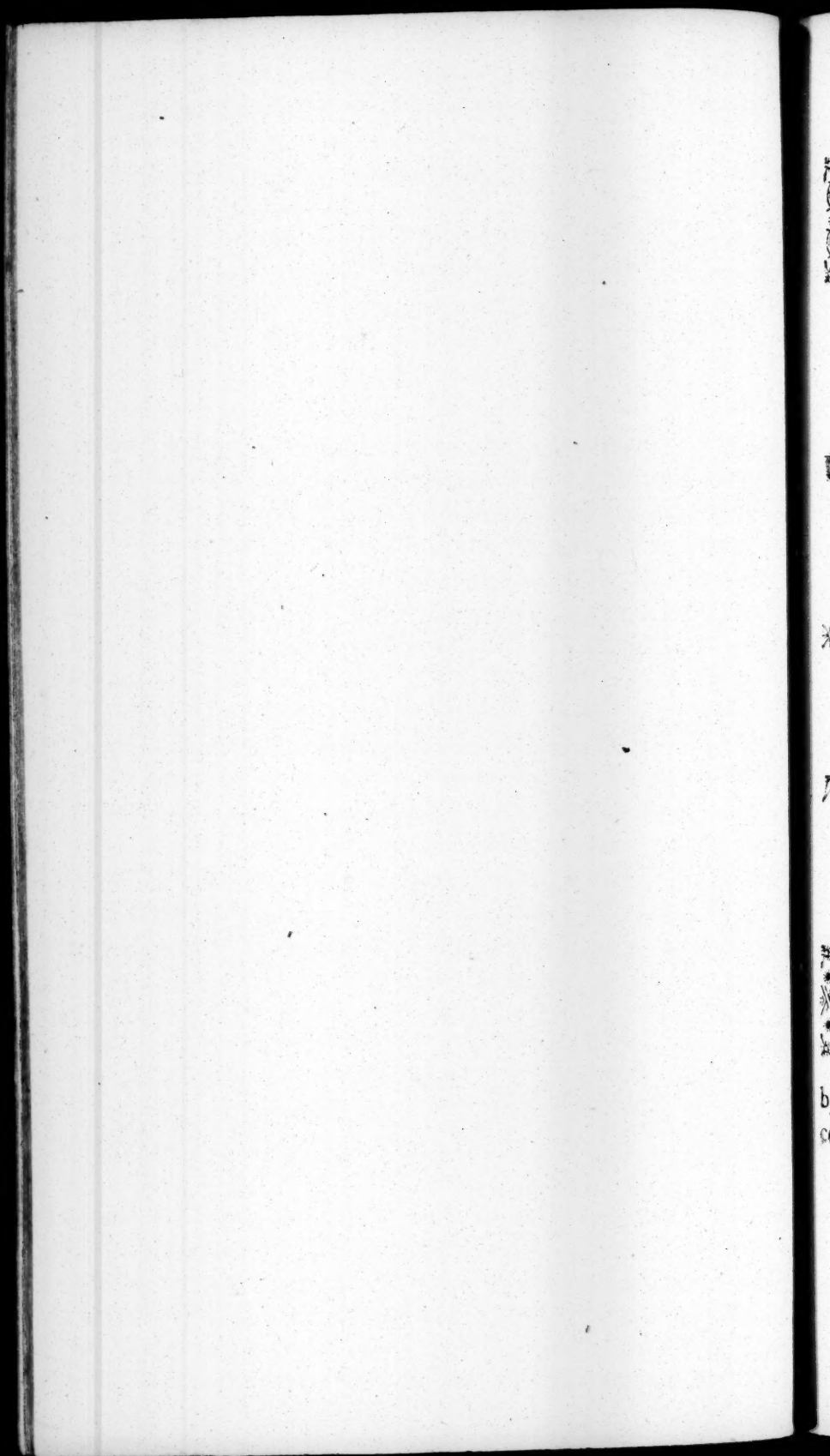
UPON the whole, God has through the Mediation of *Christ*, and by the Operation of his Spirit, made us in a moral Sense new Creatures ; strengthened the Infirmities, and repaired the Ruins of our Nature ; opened to us the Gate of Life, and enabled us, if we strive, to enter in : A Mercy to be acknowledged by us in the most devout Returns of Praise and Adoration. But unless we strive, this Grace will profit us nothing, this Strength will be given us in vain, we shall not enter in. 'Tis
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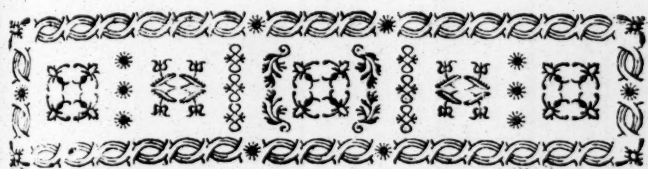
* Phil. ii. 13.

a Presumption of equal Danger to our Happiness, to imagine we can do all, and to imagine we need do nothing for the Attainment of it: The Medium between these Extremes, is the true Christian Doctrine. Of ourselves, as of ourselves, we could do nothing; but we can do all Things through *Christ* strengthening us.

LET us then give continual Thanks unto him for the Love wherewith he hath loved us, praying always with all Supplication, that being strengthened with all Might according to his glorious Power, we may work together with him, and make our Calling and Election sure.







S E R M O N XV.

Universal Obedience to the Laws of
God the indispensible Obligation
of Christians.



JAMES ii. 10.

*Whosoever shall keep the whole Law,
and yet offend in one Point, is guilty
of all.*

THAT Sin will expose us to the
Resentment of a supreme Al-
mighty Judge, is a Conclusion
so irresistibly suggested to us
by the natural Terrors of Conscience, and
confirmed by such clear and obvious De-
ductions

ductions of Reason, that we may justly look upon it as the first Dictate of that natural Law written on the Heart of Man.

BUT then this is a Prospect very uneasy to the Lusts and Passions of our Corruption, and opposite to the strongest Desires of Flesh and Blood ; a Reflection so painful and disquieting, that it corrupts our sprightliest Enjoyments, and embitters every Pleasure ; and withal so importunate, that neither Company can divert it, nor Solitude exclude it. It pursues the Hypocrite to his Closet, and the Libertine to the Brothel. It is therefore no wonder to find all the Arts of Irreligion employed to weaken the Impressions of this Truth, and reconcile Mens Vices to their Fears. This is the Aim of all the various Schemes and Projects of Sin, and is equally intended by Atheism and Immorality. It is this Enemy to their Satisfaction they both labour to suppress, the one by denying the Being or Providence of God, and so removing the Object of this Fear ; the other by representing him either as not offended, or as easily appeased, and so not to be feared.

feared. But the Notion of a God is either so implanted in the Soul, or, which is all one, so obvious a Result of our first Reasonings, that Men cannot without great Violence to their natural Sentiments, bring them to admit so hard a Conclusion as the former. And though some few may seem to acquiesce in Infidelity, and enjoy that fearless Security they propose from it, yet even these Men have their Hours of Diffidence and Uncertainty, and then all their Apprehensions of divine Vengeance return upon them with so much greater Force, as he appears now more irreconcilably offended. Religion therefore seems not so much in Danger from downright Atheism, as is sometimes imagined, since all rational Men must reject it for want of Proof; and even the Fool must be convinced by his Experience, when he finds the Evils it proposes to redress rather increased than abated by the Application.

AND if we pursue our Enquiry into the Causes of that Corruption of Manners, we lament in the World, we shall find it rather owing to some mediating Schemes, that offer to comprehend the different In-

terests of Sin and Religion, and unite the Kingdoms of Light and Darknefs.

AND among all the various Projectors who have appeared in this Attempt, none seem to have met with so general a Success, as they who apply themselves to soften the Rigour of the Precept, and explain away the Obligation or Extent of the Law; Who persuade us that all this talk of Strictness and Severity is owing to the morose Singularity of some few, who would have their own Pride or Melancholy pass for Religion: That God Almighty requires our Obedience in Proportion to the Abilities he has given us; and since the Infirmities of our Nature make our Obedience to the whole Law impossible, he cannot without the Imputation of Cruelty require more than a partial Obedience from us.

Now as this Plea appears under a Colour of Friendship to Religion, and to invite Men to it by the Easiness of the Terms it offers, the Enemy is not readily suspected: And a Proposal so agreeable to all our Passions, will insensibly prevail upon our Weakness, make our Conscience rest satisfied and secure in the known Transgression
of

of some Duties, while we are persuaded we can give God an Equivalent in the more accurate Observance of some others.

It can therefore be no unserviceable Design to Religion to undeceive Men in so important a Point, and, from the Words of the Apostle endeavour to convince them that the Piety our heavenly Father will accept, must consist in an entire unreserved Obedience to his Commands, since who-soever offends in the Breach of one Precept, 'is in his Sight guilty of the whole Law. In Prosecution of which, I shall,

- I. Confirm this Decision of the Apostle, by shewing that the Breach of one Precept necessarily implies, and therefore is fairly to be adjudged a Breach of the whole Law.
- II. As a Corollary of this Proof, I shall shew that our Obedience to other Precepts cannot atone for our Guilt in offending against one.

III. I SHALL endeavour to obviate those Pleas which encourage Men to rely on a partial Obedience. And

I. I AM to confirm this Decision of the Apostle, by shewing that the Breach of one Precept necessarily implies, and therefore is fairly to be adjudged a Breach of the whole Law.

AND here, *First*, It is to be premised, that by Offence we are to understand a knowing and voluntary Transgression of the Law. For to Sins of unaffected Ignorance, when the Law is not, and could not be known, our heavenly Father, for the Merits and through the Intercession of *Jesus Christ*, has promised his Pardon. For the Malignity of all Sin consists in the Contradiction of the Will of Man to the Will of God. Now whoever is entirely ignorant of the Law, which is the Will of God, is also ignorant whether his Actions are conformable to his Will or not, and may therefore commit a forbidden Action, and yet still preserve the highest Respect for the Law, and the most conscientious

entious Submission to the Authority of the Legislator: And if the Ignorance be innocent, the Action will be so too.

Secondly, By offending in one Point is meant an habitual Neglect of one Duty, founded on a Disbelief of the Necessity of our performing it: And not any single Act of Transgression. For the irresistible Infirmities of our Nature make a perfect and unerring Obedience, as to single Acts of Sin, impossible; and therefore to preach up the Necessity of that which our Experience tells us is utterly impracticable, were to affright Mankind with the terrible Prospect of universal Damnation.

THE Proposition then implied in my Text, is this, That whoever knows the Law, and yet denies his Obedience to any one Precept of it, is guilty of Disobedience to the whole Law. And the manifest Reason of this Decision is, because he subverts the Authority of the whole: For that which gives Force and Efficacy to the Law, is the Authority of him that enacts it, and consequently whoever destroys this Authority, does in effect annul the Law.

Now

Now since all the Precepts of the Law are equally commanded by God, whatever Reasonings can dispute away, or induce a Man to dispense with the Authority of one Precept, are equally conclusive against the rest : And whatever Plea can excuse our obligation to one Duty, must have the same Force, when applied to another. And this is the Argument the Apostle makes use of for the Proof of my Text, in the Words following : *He that said do not kill, said also, do not commit Adultery: Now if thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art a Transgressor of the Law* * : i. e. It is the same Authority that commands our Obedience to one Precept of the Law, as to another ; and if this Authority does not oblige our Observance in one Precept it is impossible to assign any Reason why it should oblige more in another. The Law must oblige either in all Precepts, or in none : If it oblige in all, all are to be obeyed ; if it oblige in none, it has no longer the Authority of a Law, and can at most be esteemed but as the Advice of a Friend, which we are at Liberty whether we will comply

* James ii. 11.

comply with or not. If therefore denying the Authority of the Law be transgressing the whole Law, and the avowed Violation of one Precept implies a Denial of the Authority of the Law, it remains, that offending in one Point, as I have before explained it, is effectually transgressing the whole Law.

To illustrate this farther, let us consider that the only Principles that preserve Mens Reverence of God, and engage their Obedience to his Laws, are either Fear and Apprehension of his Justice in their Punishment, or Love and the Expectation of those Rewards he proposes to Obedience. Now all the Restraint Men are under from these Motives, is by the Violation of one Law broken through ; and the Principle which influenced their Obedience, has lost its Efficacy on them ; the Partition between Good and Evil is broken down ; and where one Sin has entered, Legions will force their Way through the same Breach. For he that can in the Transgression of one Precept, despise the Terrors of the divine Majesty, and the Endearments of his Mercy, is no longer under
any

any Impression from those Motives that can engage his Obedience to the rest.

IT must be considered farther, that the Right our Creator has to our Obedience, is of so high and transcendent a Nature, that it can suffer no Competition; his Commands must have the first and governing Influence on all our Actions. Whoever therefore in any one avowed Instance of Sin, gives any temporal Motive or Principle a Direction over his Actions superior to the Law of God, dethrones the Deity, while he denies the divine Law that sovereign Authority it ought to have over him. Neither,

II. CAN our observance of other Parts of our Duty be any Atonement for our Guilt in offending in one Point, or entitle us to the Rewards of Obedience. For it is not our performing any particular Action but our performing it in Obedience to the divine Law, that renders it acceptable to God. Now whoever performs some Duties required by the Law, while he neglects others, cannot act from any Conviction that he ought to obey, or from
any

any Regard to the Authority of the Legislator, which being the same in all, would equally influence his Obedience to all; but the virtuous Actions he performs, are either,

1. PURELY a Compliance with natural Appetite; and consequently are not to be looked on as Instances of Obedience to a divine Law. Did the same natural Motives of Action appear with the same Force, against those Precepts of the Law which he seems to obey, as they do against those which he visibly transgresses, he would violate these with as little Reluctancy and Sense of Disobedience, as he does them. The Psalmist has given us the true Character of this Man. *He careth not for God, neither is God in all his Thoughts* *. He never considers whether an Action be commanded or forbidden by God, but, without Distinction, resigns up himself to those natural Motives of Action which his Appetite or Inclination suggest. But,

2. SUPPOSING him not to be insensible of an Obedience due to God Almighty, and to act with some Regard to it, yet
since

* Psalm. x. 4.

since this Regard is so small, that in some Instances it is manifestly inferior to a Temptation, where the same Temptation applied to other Parts of his Duty, it would by the same regular Influence engage him to transgress them too. His Religion is no more than the Want of Temptation will permit him to have ; he commits every Sin that his Appetite calls for, or perhaps his Constitution or Fortune can bear ; and it is for want of Temptation or Ability that he commits no more : And consequently, whatever his Pretensions may be, it is not from any just Sense of his Allegiance to God, that he observes any Precept of the Law, but because his Interest or natural Temper give him no Aversion to the Performance. Nay,

3. It may appear not only consistent with the Pursuits he is engaged in, but the Profit, the Reputation, or the Convenience of the Virtue, may recommend it, from the same Inducements of Pleasure and Advantage, by which he has been determined in the Choice of his favourite Vices ; and so he may obey the Law in one Instance, from the Motives that prevail on him

him to break it in another. But this is not serving God, but our own Lusts. We accidentally indeed perform what is commanded by the Law of God, but the Obedience of the Action is paid to his Enemy: And if we perform the whole Law upon no better Principle than this, it would be far from an acceptable Service to God.

THE Covetous may be chaste and temperate, and the Libertine charitable, but not in Obedience to a divine Command; Avarice engages the one, and the Reputation of the Virtue the other. And though God does not generally distinguish the virtuous Actions of bad Men, from the Obedience of his Servants in the present and immediate Consequences of them; though he does not destroy that Connexion he has ordained between a virtuous Practice and temporal Happiness; but the Frugality of the Malicious is rewarded with Plenty, the Temperance of the Covetous with Health and Length of Days, and the Charity of the Libertine with Esteem and Reputation; yet their Consequence in the more important Event of human Actions, will be widely different:
For

For the temporal Reward is indeed annexed to the bare Performance of the Action, but the eternal to the Obedience.

BUT allowing that these virtuous Actions are performed from a due Sense of the Authority of God, and out of a sincere Intention of Obedience to his Laws; for these are manifestly the Pretensions of some Men: They are with great Zeal concerned for the Observance of some Parts of the Law, while they can calmly transgress others, and think that their Exactness in one Duty, will atone for their Neglect of another. And it is to be feared a great Part of Mankind will be found to rely on no better a Title to Christianity than this. Something they are forced to do to stop the Demands of an importunate Conscience, which will not be satisfied without something it can call its Religion. Even the Pride of human Nature will not suffer Men to act without some Pretence of Principles to justify their Conduct. The most Dissolute affect still the Character of rational Agents, and are therefore busy in forming Schemes of Morality, consistent with their several Vices. Each has some
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darling Lust, which pleads for a Reserve, and which they would fain reconcile to the Expectations of Religion. And when an eager Appetite, and the Uneasiness of an unsatisfied Desire are engaged in the Controversy, the Understanding is bribed, and overlooks even its own Convictions; and weak Arguments will determine the Man in Favour of his beloved Enjoyments. But how so partial a Judgment can consist with any Pretence to Conscience, or why he should scruple at the Commission of one Sin, who can without Regret abandon himself to another, is hard to be imagined. Conscience refers us to the revealed Will of God, as the Measure and Standard of our Obedience; and since we can thence produce no Warrant for Exception or Reserve, Conscience can never encourage us to hope for his Favour, while we act contrary to the Direction of any one of his Laws.

BUT the Absurdity of these partial Schemes of Religion may appear even from hence, that scarce any two Men can be found agreeing in the same: Each is for laying the Restraint wide enough to take

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in his favourite Irregularity ; and wherever the standing Rule does not interfere with that, allows it to be just and reasonable, and will readily condemn those who transgress it. 'Tis plain therefore that his Decisions are corrupt and partial ; the Judgment of his Passions, and not of his Reason ; the Philosophy of the Sinner, and not of the Man.

BUT let us remember that 'tis the renouncing this very Lust we are fond of, is the Obedience God requires from us. This is the only Test of our Affection to his Service, and Submission to his Authority. To decline an Action we have no Interest, nor Inclination to perform, is sacrificing to God that which cost us nought. But when we subdue the Reluctances of our Corruption, and offer up the beloved of our Souls upon his Altar, this will be received as a decisive Proof of our Affection: We then evidently prefer God to his Rival, and determine for *Christ* against *Belial*. This is the Rule, the Measure, the Test of our Allegiance : And however inoffensive we may be in other Parts of our Conduct, if we are found wanting in this

Trial

Trial of our Love, we shall be disowned by God as Traitors and Enemies. But since so great a Part of the World are engaged in Pursuits manifestly inconsistent with this Doctrine, let us farther endeavour their Conviction, by considering,

III. WHAT are the Pleas which delude so great a Part of Mankind, and induce them to believe that God will be satisfied with a partial Obedience.

Now this is a Conclusion they pretend to infer,

1. FROM a comparative View of the Mercy and Goodness of God, and the Infirmary of Men.

2. FROM those easy Representations he has given of Religion, and that Compassion he has expressed to Sinners in Scripture. And,

1. *First*, 'Tis urged that God Almighty is a wise and merciful Father, who knows the Powers and Weaknesses of our Nature, and the Number and Difficulty of those Temptations we are exposed to. When therefore he gave us a Law, upon the Observance of which our Happiness was to

Y 2 depend,

depend, both his Mercy and Justice were obliged to proportion the Service to the Capacity of that Being from whom he required it: And since an entire Observance of the whole Law is manifestly beyond our Abilities, God cannot without the Imputation of Cruelty be supposed to require more than a partial Obedience from us.

BUT in answer to this we may observe, first, that since God has by plain and positive Precept required our Obedience to every Command of the Law, it is a much fairer Inference from his Knowledge of our Abilities, and his inseparable Attributes of Goodness and Justice, to conclude that so good, so just, and so compassionate a Being would not require Impossibilities, and insult the Weakness of his Creatures with a delusive Proposal of Happiness, which he knew they could never attain, and consequently that the Obedience he has so expressly commanded, is certainly within our Capacities to perform. But to give a more direct Answer to this Plea, it must be observed that this Objection proceeds upon a mistaken Sense of the Doctrine we assert; which is not that God requires a perfect

perfect unfinning Obedience, free from particular Acts of Transgression: Thus we acknowledge it impossible for us to obey any one Law: But that every Law of God is equally to be obeyed, and we can certainly obey one Law of God as well as another, though our Obedience to every one will be attended with some Imperfections. It is not denied that from the Disposition of natural Temper, the Prepossessions of Habit, or the Circumstances they are placed in, Men may find a greater Difficulty in obeying one Law than another: But if in these Instances we do as much as we are able, we fulfil the Law; and if we sincerely endeavour not to transgress, we obey; and these Conditions are surely not impossible to the weakest Capacity. But if we presume to reject any one divine Law, and disown our Obedience, (which is the Case of those who contend for the Sufficiency of a partial Obedience) this is not an Act of Infirmary, but a deliberate Rebellion against the Authority of the Legislator, and is consequently (as I before proved) to be looked on and punished as a Breach of the whole Law. So that it cannot be inferred

from the Infirmities of Man, or the Goodness of God, that our Obedience to any one of the divine Laws is excused; because, notwithstanding these Infirmities, we can endeavour to obey every one of the divine Laws, and therefore God may with the greatest Justice strictly require these Endeavours from us, and without any Inconsistency with his Goodness, inflict the Penalties of the Law on those who are wanting in these Endeavours to obey it. Let us then,

2. *Secondly*, EXAMINE whether any Plea can be drawn from Scripture to excuse or to justify a partial Obedience. Now it is not pretended that the Scriptures in express Terms dispense with any one divine Law, but a general Argument is formed upon those Representations we there find of Religion, as an easy agreeable Institution, a Refreshment to the Weary, and a Relief to the Laden; *Its Ways, Ways of Pleasantness, and all its Paths Peace* *; and other Characters of the like Importance: Whence Men are willing to infer, that Christianity cannot be that difficult severe Thing

* Prov. iii. 17.

Thing we would make it, restraining all our Inclinations, and denying our most eager Appetites the Satisfactions they press for; but a good-natured complying Institution, and which requires no stricter Obedience than may consist with an Indulgence to present Pleasure.

BUT to this it may be answered in few Words, That the Pleasures which these Scriptures ascribe to Religion, are of a Kind very different from those in favour of which they are here alledged, and generally consist not so much in the religious Action itself, which may be, and frequently is, full of Difficulty and Uneasiness, as in the Consequences of it, and more especially in the Peace of a Conscience satisfied with the Performance of its Duty. Or however, that an Indulgence to the Lusts and Vices of Men, can never be imagined to be here tacitly implied, since they are plainly and particularly forbidden in innumerable other Places of Scripture. But here they have Refuge, and that is under the Example of those Servants of God, whose Failings and Miscarriages are recorded in Scripture. But first, These

Instances do not come up to the Point in Question, which is not whether a Man may not in general be acceptable to God, notwithstanding some Sins of Surprize or Infirmary; but whether a Man may be acceptable to God, though he disowns Obedience to any one of his Laws. Offences of the former Kind we before allowed might consist with our Title to Salvation, and no other can be produced in the Example of any Person, who is mentioned in a Character approved by God. And,

Secondly, THE Failings of these good Men are recorded in Scripture as Monuments of the Weakness of human Nature, and at the same Time to convince us that these great Examples were nothing more than Men subject to the same Infirmities with ourselves, and consequently that the same Obedience which was acceptable in them, is possible to us: That if we are as ready to imitate their Repentance, as we are to transcribe their Faults, we shall be received with the same Mercy that they were. But we cannot with the least Shew of Reason hence conclude, that God was pleased with their Transgressions, or allows

shows our Imitation: On the contrary, the Failings even of these holy Persons passed not in any Instance unresented by God; and the same Scripture which informs us of the Sin, records the Punishment. And our Christianity commands us to act after a nobler Pattern than the Virtues even of the most perfect Men, even him in whom there was no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth.

IN sum; Strict and unreserved Obedience is the universal Language of Scripture. The great Sanction of the *Mosaical* Law is, *Cursed be every one that confirms not every Word of this Law to do it* *. And the Gospel every where commands us to *cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, to be holy in all Manner of Conversation, and abstain even from all Appearance of Evil; to add to Faith Virtue, to Virtue Knowledge, Temperance, Patience, and Charity* †; and, without Exception, to be perfect in the whole System of Christian Morality.

UPON the whole then, Let us in Application of what has been offered, stand
still

* Deut. xxvii. 26. † 2 Cor. vii. 1. 1 Pet. i. 15.

still and examine how the fashionable Practice of the World can be reconciled to this important Doctrine of our Religion. It was the Glory of rising Christianity, that a clear and uniform Virtue shone bright in the Lives of its Disciples and distinguished them from the rest of Mankind. It was a strict Observance of every Precept of their Religion ; it was an exemplary Conquest over Passion and Appetite, a resolute Zeal for the Honour, and an unwearied Devotion in the Service of God, that recommended the Gospel to the World : Men saw their Works, and glorified their Father which was in Heaven. But alas ! with what Shame and Regret must we observe the Reverse of this Character, in the present Lives and Morality of Christians ; when we see Piety and Holiness ridiculed as morose Singularities, and those Vices not only owned, but gloried in, at the bare mention of which a Christian ought to tremble ; when even the best of us appear contented with a mingled imperfect Virtue, and the far greater and more publick Part of our Examples are so professedly abandoned to Vice, that instead of offending
but

but in one Point, they have scarce the Appearance of obeying in one.

LET us then reflect how glorious an Act of Resolution it would be in us, to appear in Countenance of discredited Duty, and by a bright and uniform Example of Piety, revive the declining Spirit of Religion, and retrieve the ancient Honour of Christianity. Let us not amuse ourselves with vain Projects of reconciling Sin and Duty, but be contented to tread the old, though strait and narrow Paths of Faith and Obedience; the Paths in which Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs are gone before us; and let us not fondly imagine, that the Way to Happiness is made plainer to us than it was to them.

LET us remember that our Religion has taught us that there is no Communion of Light with Darknes, that we cannot serve two Interests, so perfectly irreconcilable as God and Mammon. That God Almighty will not be obeyed by Halves, or suffer the Allegiance we owe him to be shared between him and his Enemy. Let us then give a general Discharge to all our Lusts and irregular Desires, and let none be so secret

secret as to be concealed, or so beloved as to be spared. Let no Sin appear small or inconsiderable, by which an Almighty God is offended, and our eternal Salvation endangered. And if our Obedience be like the young Man's in the Gospel, so near to Perfection that but one Thing is lacking, let us not suffer a single Vice to rob us of our Share of eternal Happiness, and make it in vain for us that a *Jesus*, a Saviour, is come into the World. Let us not delude ourselves with vain Hopes: that God will reverse one of his Laws, or depart from the established Rules of his Justice, in our Favour. He hath said, *This do and thou shalt live* *. And shall Man dispute the Conditions? Shall Dust and Ashes prescribe the Terms on which it will be saved? And,

Lastly, LET no Pretence of Difficulty weaken our Resolutions in the Pursuit of our Duty, since God has not only proportioned the Burden to our Abilities, with all the Compassion of a merciful Father, but has also assured us of the Support of his Holy Spirit, who will supply Vigour to the

* Luke x. 28.

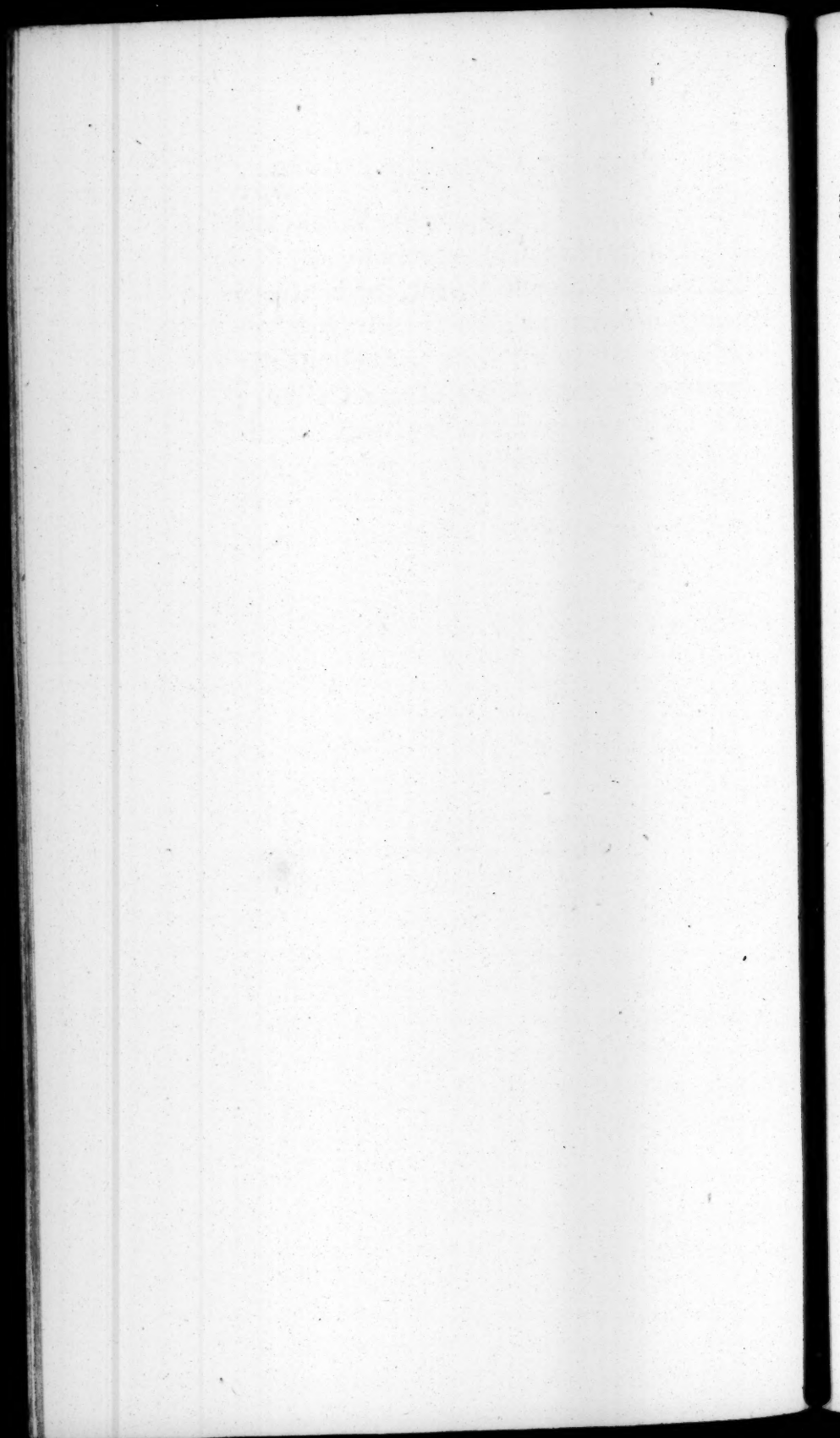
Universal Obedience. 333

the Weary, and Strength to the Weak, and make us more than Conquerors.

LET us not therefore faint, or be weary in our Journey ; much less turn back, or sit down in Despair ; but press chearfully forward to the high Mark of our Calling ; and as far as our own Ability, and the divine Assistance will carry us, endeavour to be pure as our Creator is pure, and perfect as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect.



S E R-





S E R M O N XVI.

The Goodness of God a Motive to
Repentance.



R o m. ii. 4. latter Part.

*Not knowing that the Goodness of
God leadeth thee to Repentance.*

G O D Almighty has in no In-
stance left us a more effectual
Conviction of his Love to Man-
kind, than in the various Me-
thods he makes use of to engage us in the
Promotion of his Glory, and our own Hap-
piness. He has addressed every Faculty and
Passion

Passion of our Nature with Arguments and Motives infinitely more deserving our Regard, than those which usually govern us in the common Actions of our Lives. If our Fears can be awakened with the Dread of Evil, he has armed his Laws with the Terror of eternal Misery. If our Hopes can be influenced by the Promise of Reward, he has encouraged our Obedience by the Assurance of a glorious Immortality. If our Love and Affection can be engaged, he daily endeavours it by the most endearing Instances of Favour and Goodness towards us. This last is the Motive, which the Apostle in my Text reminds his Converts of their Duty to comply with. He seems with a just Regret to have observed, that Men are apt to grow more remiss in their Duty for the Indulgence of God towards them, and by a very dangerous Mistake to infer from the Mercy and Long-suffering of God, that they were themselves sufficiently secure of his Favour: And to censure others whom God was pleased to visit with Affliction, as the only Persons who needed Repentance. But the Apostle with great Zeal discourages so unreasonable a
Pre-

a Motive to Repentance. 337

Prefumption, and assures them that the divine Wisdom designed the same Effect from both Dispensations : And as he intended to reform the one by Discipline and Correction, so he expected that his Goodness should lead the other to Repentance.

IN treating this Subject I shall shew,

I. THAT it is the Intention of Providence, in all the various Expressions of his Goodness, to reclaim Mankind and to engage their Obedience.

II. I SHALL consider the Propriety and Efficacy of this Motive, to induce our Obedience and Repentance.

III. I SHALL endeavour to apply this Motive, and persuade you in the Force of it to bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance.

I. IT is the Intention of Providence, in all the various Expressions of his Goodness, to reclaim Mankind and engage their Obedience.

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THIS is the Argument by which he delights to prevail, and it is with Reluctancy he is provoked by our Impenitence to apply the Discipline of Severity and Correction. He had rather Mankind should adore him as their Patron and Benefactor, as the Author of their Felicity, and the Protector of their Being. And though we are frequently reminded in Scripture of the Power, Justice, and Severity of God, yet the Obedience which is especially acceptable to him, is what flows from our Love and Gratitude. And therefore in that comprehensive Summary which is given us of our Duty to God, there is no express Mention of our Fear ; but we are told the first and great Commandment is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Soul, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Strength, and with all thy Mind.* And agreeably we may observe the Almighty introduces the Proposal of his Laws, rather with the Mention of some particular Acts of Kindness and Mercy, than by reminding Mankind of his Severity and Rigour ; to convince them that they were the Commands of a Friend who consulted their Happiness,
and

and to reconcile them with Pleasure to the Duties he enjoined.

THUS in the Delivery of the *Mosaical* Law, he addresses the Affections of that People in that engaging Preface, *I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, out of the House of Bondage* *. Before the Law, he was worshipped by *Abraham* as his Shield, and great Reward : By the House of *Israel*, till their coming forth out of *Egypt*, as the God of their Fathers, the God of *Abraham, Isaac,* and *Jacob*. And under the Gospel he continues to recommend himself to our Adoration, as the Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, by whom we obtain Redemption out of the spiritual *Egypt*, the Bondage of Sin and Satan. And in every Act of our Christian Worship, we are taught to call upon him under the endearing Character of our Father, to remind us of our Adoption, that we are made Heirs of God, and joint Heirs of *Christ*. Thus studiously does God endeavour to render his Service acceptable to Mankind, and had rather per-

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* Exod. xx. 2.

suade than force their Obedience : Neither are his Methods or Intentions different in his Dispensations to each private Man : The present Instances of Favour he vouchsafes every one of us, are designed not only to encourage, but to engage our Obedience. While there is any Probability of recommending his Commands to our Love and Inclination, he applies to our Gratitude by Obligations of Kindness and Beneficence, of Long-Suffering and Forbearance. He reprieves the Sinner from time to time, and continues and even heaps on him the Favours of his Providence, in Hopes that, by an Act of Clemency so undeserved, he may prevail on his Gratitude and Repentance.

II. AND the Propriety and Efficacy of this Motive, (which is the *Second* Thing I propose to consider) might be sufficiently concluded from what I have already observed ; that the infallible Wisdom of God, who knows every Faculty and Passion of our Nature, and in what Manner they can most successfully be applied to, had chosen this Motive, before all other, to lead Mankind

a Motive to Repentance. 341

kind into Duty and Obedience: But this will more particularly appear from the following Considerations.

1. IF we reflect on the Force of Goodness in General, and with how prevailing an Influence Acts of Kindness and Favour engage the Love and Compliance of Mankind, we cannot but conclude it to be the most effectual of all Arguments. Goodness is a Character which carries irresistible Charms and Persuasions along with it, and which alone can give us an Interest in the Hearts and Affections of Men. To love them who love us is so natural a Passion, that even the most intractable Tempers obey its Force. The Perfections of any Person may create our Veneration, his Power our Fear, and his Authority arising thence a servile and necessitated Obedience: But Love and Inclination can be produced only by an Experience or Opinion of Kindness to us. Now (as I observed) the Service that God delights in is free and voluntary, the Obedience of Sons and not of Slaves. He requires our Hearts and Affections, the Service of our Choice and

our Love, which no Method could effectually engage but the convincing Mankind by previous Acts of Kindness and Beneficence, that their Happiness was dear to him, that he intended nothing in the Duties he enjoined but the Advancement of their Felicity. But,

2. THE Force of this Motive will especially appear, if we consider the transcendent Value of those Benefits, for which Mankind stand indebted to their Creator; Benefits, on the Continuance of which to us all our Capacities of Happiness and even our very Being depends, our Support in the present Life, and our only Hopes in the future: To which we may add,

3. THAT this is an Argument particularly adapted to prevail on all Capacities of Men. The far greater Part of Men are no otherwise moved than by Sense, and have neither Leisure nor Ability so far to improve their Power of Reflection, as to be capable of conceiving the divine Perfections without the Assistance of sensible Objects: And these can be no other than
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a Motive to Repentance. 343

some visible Effects of either the Power, or Goodness of God. The general Effects of his Power might indeed sufficiently manifest his Nature, if duly reflected on: but Men seldom consider God any otherwise than in Relation to themselves, and therefore want some extraordinary Benefits to excite their Attention, and engage their Love. These beyond all other Arguments leave the strongest Impression on our Mind, and awaken our gratitude to some Thoughts of Return. And indeed if the Sense of the divine Beneficence cannot persuade us, if an Argument recommended with so many tender Expressions of Love cannot move us, if we can be deaf to the Words of so sweet a Charmer, and inexorable to all his Invitations, in vain will it be hoped that other Arguments should have a greater Influence on us.

I HAVE hitherto considered the Efficacy of this Motive as it influenced our Obedience in every Part of our Duty to God, as a Principle that should animate the Zeal, enliven the Devotions, and confirm the Resolutions of the best of Men: But we may

farther reflect with how peculiar a Force it persuades the Repentance of the Sinner. For if even the Righteous, when he considers the many gracious Expressions of divine Compassion towards him, and that the poor imperfect Sacrifice of human Obedience is all the Acknowledgment, that either he can make or his merciful Creator requires, is filled with a religious Astonishment at the Riches of his Goodness, and his Affections charmed into the strongest Resolutions of Submission and Duty, what piercing Impressions must the Sinner receive from these Reflections? When he considers that the Person he offends, and has perhaps provoked through a long Course of Impiety, is not only of infinite Worth and Majesty, one who has the most transcendent Title to his Service and Obedience, and who is able to strike the Offender dead in a Moment, and vindicate the Honour of his Laws by a single Act of his Power? But what is more than all this, is his Friend and his Father, one who has obliged him by the most endearing Acts of Kindness and Favour, who has not only supplied him with Life, and
Breath,

a Motive to Repentance. 345

Breath, and all Things, but has with amazing Compassion born with all his weak and obstinate Refusals of Grace, has given him Time, Day after Day, and Year after Year, to consider better of his Condition, and pressed him by all the most engaging Motives to accept his Favour, and be saved? What wounding Reproaches of Soul must he then feel, from the Reflection on his own Ingratitude; and what Impatience to reconcile himself to so indulgent a Creator? And as the Arguments drawn from the Goodness of God have so prevailing an Efficacy to induce Men to repent, so the peculiar Propriety of them will farther appear, if we reflect that they are both the most generous, and the most lasting Foundation of our Conversion to God. For how much more noble is it, how much more becoming the Dignity of our Nature, and the Excellency of our Religion, to perform our Duty to God rather out of a grateful Sense of our Obligations to his Goodness, than from the Dread of his Power and Resentment? In the first Case, the governing Principle of our Conversion and Obedience

ence will be the Love of God ; but in the latter, merely the love of ourselves. When we are thus frightened and terrified into Duty, we enter into the Service of God with Coldness and Indifference, and our Obedience is hardly voluntary ; we submit to the Yoke of *Christ* as a Hardship thrown upon us, by a Power we were afraid to resist. Our Correction may produce the Obedience of Clients or Slaves, but 'tis Love and Gratitude alone can give us the Title of Friends and Sons of God. And as that Repentance which is the Effect of Fear and Punishment is less generous, so it is usually less sincere and lasting, than that which flows from our Reflections on the divine Goodness towards us. We see, in too frequent Instances, the Relapses of those who either under the present Smart, or the near Apprehension of the divine Displeasure, have with the most solemn Vows resolved on a religious Reformation. While the Man is under the Scourge of Affliction, 'tis no Wonder if he be willing to shake off so troublesome a Companion, and abjure those Sins which he now experimentally finds attended with
such

a Motive to Repentance. 347

such bitter Consequences. But the Danger is, when the Rod is removed, and the Smart over, lest he then forget the Hand whence the Stroke came, and return to his former Course of Sin and Pleasure. Affliction indeed generally disables a Man, while he is under the Pressure of it, from pursuing the greater Part of those Vices, in which the guilt of Men consists. If the Afflictions be on his Body, his Appetites are weakened, and his Capacity of Fruition destroyed: If on his Fortunes and Estate, he is rendered incapable of the Expence of his Pleasures: And 'tis but a poor imperfect Virtue to refrain from that which is out of his Power. Let but his Capacities of Enjoyment return, we shall find his Lusts plead hard for their accustomed Gratifications, and him ready to propose as much Happiness in them as he did before. But now the Repentance, which is formed by a grateful Sense of the divine Goodness and Beneficence towards him, is resolved on while all the Appetites are in their Strength and Vigour. The Penitent conquers the Temptations of Sin in their full Force, is
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in the first Onset Master of all that is difficult in Duty, and consequently is in no Danger from any future Conflict. Nay, the Difficulty will every Day grow less and wear off, and Obedience become easy and familiar. The great Struggle with his Passions is in the first Check, and if his Gratitude to God can give him Resolution enough for that Conquest, when his Lusts had all the Confirmation of Habit and Custom, when his Appetites were pressing and strong, and in their full Relish of Pleasure, and the Duties of Religion on the other Side irksome and uneasy, Performances he was unacquainted with, and had no Inclination to set about; if under the Disadvantage of all these Prepossessions, this Motive has Force enough to recommend his Duty to his Choice, it must be infinitely superior to any Temptation that shall afterwards assault his Integrity. Let me then,

III. PERSUADE you seriously to consider and effectually to apply this gracious Motive, which the Compassion of our heavenly Father makes Use of to lead us to Repen-

a Motive to Repentance. 349

Repentance and Obedience. Let us then frequently represent to our Souls the many Instances of Love and Beneficence, for which we daily stand indebted to the Goodness of God. Let us reflect that 'tis from him we receive the Distinctions of our Station, the Support and Protection of our Lives; that 'tis he who gives Health to our Bodies, and Grace to our Souls; that to his Bounty we owe all we enjoy here, and to his Compassion in *Christ* all that we can hope for hereafter.

AND let it not appear the least Instance of his Mercy, that when he might have demanded our Obedience by Right of Creation, and as a Tribute to his supreme Power, he has condescended rather to do it by repeated Acts of Kindness and Favour. That he he has adapted the Arguments of Obedience to the Weakness of our Wills and the Imperfections of our Understanding, requiring us to consider him only under the amiable Attributes of Goodness and Loving-kindness, and to adore him as our Friend and our Patron. Let us then reflect what Returns so good and so gracious a Being has a Title to
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from us. Shall any Thing appear too valuable to be sacrificed to him, to whom we are so infinitely obliged? Is any Lust or Interest too dear to us to be parted with for his Sake; who with-held not the only begotten of his Bosom, but gave up the anointed Son of his Love to the Cross, for our Redemption? Should so indulgent a Benefactor have required some great Thing of us, should not we have done it? How much more when he only intreats us to repent, and be saved? And let us then impartially consider what we have done towards the Discharge of those numberless Obligations which the Riches of his Goodness have heaped on us. Do we find any Effect of them on our Lives? Do we feel our Love more inflamed towards him, our Devotions raised, or our Resolutions of Repentance more sincere, from the Influence of so engaging a Motive? Be we assured, if his Goodness be without any Effect on our Gratitude, he will change the Methods of his Providence, and visit our Afflictions with Scourges. If a Man will not turn, he will whet his Sword, and convince him by the Terrors of his Majesty

Majesty that he is the Sovereign of the World, and has a Right to the Obedience of Men. This indeed is the most favourable Treatment that a Sinner can hope for, who continues unreclaimed by the Goodness of God ; and so compassionate a Punishment will itself demand his Gratitude : But he has Reason to apprehend an infinitely more terrible Infliction from his Justice : That he will give him up to his own Heart's Lusts, and let him follow his own Imaginations, and leave him to ruin himself by his own Blindness and Indiscretion. For let us remember, that the Spirit of God will not always strive with the Obstinacy of Men : His Forbearance and Long-suffering will not endure for ever ; but if neglected and despised, will certainly be withdrawn from us. That he has fixed and determined the Time for our Repentance, beyond which he will no longer await the Perverseness of Men, no longer suffer his Compassion to be abused. For we must not ascribe unto God such an unlimited Exercise of Mercy, as may destroy his Justice ; for this is an Attribute as essential to the Deity as his Goodness ;
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and his Glory is as much manifested in the Execution of the one, as in displaying the other; and if the Obstinacy of Sinners disappoint his gracious Intention of setting forth his Mercy in their Pardon and Salvation, he will do Honour to his Justice in their Punishment! Alas! in vain do we hope that God will overlook such high Contradiction of Sinners, and pardon Offences committed against the plain Convictions of Conscience, and in open Contempt of all the Means he has appointed to bring Men to Duty and Repentance. When he has proposed all the Motives of Conversion to us, and given us Time and Capacity to apply them to our Souls; he has done all that the most merciful Creator could do for our Recovery. And if all these gracious Indulgences are without any Effect on us, we must perish in our own Folly, and our Blood will be upon our own Heads. God has appointed his Mercy to be a Refuge to Mankind for Sins of Ignorance, Surprise, and Inadvertency; not as a Sanctuary for prophane and incorrigible Sinners: To pass by such a wilful and presumptuous

a Motive to Repentance. 353

tuous Contempt of Grace as this, would be an Argument rather of Weakness than Compassion ; it would debase the Majesty, and reflect Dishonour upon the Justice and Sovereignty of God.

No, be we assured the Day will come when we shall be called to a severe Account for all his slighted and abused Mercies, for all the Favours of his Grace and Providence, for the Years we have spent in Pleasure and Security, regardless of all our Obligations to his Bounty, and the frequent Calls and Invitations of his Holy Spirit to Repentance.

ALAS ! whither can we hope to retreat in that Day, when Mercy itself shall be turned into Judgment, and that Goodness, which alone we could fly to for Shelter, shall already have been wearied by our Impenitence, and will then be produced as an Argument for the Justice of our Condemnation ? Let us therefore, while the Door of divine Compassion is yet open, while our Prayers can be heard, and our Repentance be received, address ourselves to make our Peace with our God, and by a just Acknowledgment of his Goodness to

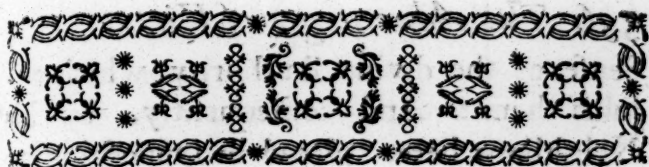
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354 *God's Goodness, &c.*

us here, entitle ourselves to those more glorious Expressions of it, which he has reserved for our Reward in a blessed Immortality hereafter.





S E R M O N X V H.

The Righteous Man the best Friend
to the Community.



PROV. xii. 26. former Part.

*The Righteous is more excellent than
his Neighbour.*

Y the Righteous in the Lan-
B guage of Scripture, especially
of *David* and *Solomon*, is in-
tended the religious Man ;
one who fears God, and eschews Evil ;
who applies himself to the Discharge
of all personal and relative Duties,
from Convictions of Conscience, and a
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356 *The Advantages of Virtue*

Sense of the divine Authority which enjoins them : And consequently, by his Neighbour here, placed in Opposition to him, must be meant a Man of the contrary Character, one who careth not for God, but pursues the Interests or Pleasures of the World, without any Regard to his Authority, or the Rules he has prescribed to the Actions of Men. The Excellency here ascribed to the former of these Characters, may refer either to the personal Happiness attending it, or its beneficial Influence on Society. In this last View I shall at present consider the Aphorism before us, and as equivalent to this Proposition, That a Man of Religion and Virtue is a more useful, and consequently a more valuable Member of a Community, than his wicked Neighbour. A Truth which seems to have found the Contradiction of the Scorners, even in *Solomon's* Reign ; and therefore we cannot wonder to find it opposed by Persons of the same Character in any other Age, or under any other Administration, though as wise and just as his. For Religion will never be without Enemies, nor those Enemies be wanting in Endeavours

Endeavours to expose it to the Contempt or Averſion of Mankind. *Solomon*, we may preſume, at leaſt in the wiſer and better Part of his Reign, acted in his Royal Character as he often in this Book adviſes his Son; and made the Diſpenſations of his Juſtice and Favour an Encouragement to the Good and Virtuous, and a Diſcountenance and Reſtraint to the Libertine. But his Example, as a Preacher, is more properly before us in this Place: And when the Overflowings of Ungodlineſs make us afraid, the Miniſters of Religion cannot better diſcharge their Duty of oppoſing it, than by aſſerting and enforcing the Concluſions of this great Prince, deduced with the Aſſiſtance of inſpired Wiſdom from long Experience, and an attentive Obſervation on the Tendency and Events of human Actions. And the Truth and Juſtice of his Reflection in my Text, in the View I propoſed to conſider it, will appear to us if we obſerve,

- I. IN General, the Neceſſity of Virtue and Religion to the Ends of civil Society.

358 *The Advantages of Virtue*

It will yet more distinctly appear if we observe,

II. IN a more particular Application, how these Qualities fit and dispose Men for the most useful Discharge of the several Offices and Relations of social Life. I will add,

III. A RELIGIOUS Motive to value and esteem Persons of this excellent Character, because by their Piety and Prayers the Blessing of God is derived on the Community.

I. IN Contradiction to my first general Observation, it has been offered us, among the refined Productions of the present Age, that Vice is a Thing highly beneficial to Society, derives on it so many Advantages that publick Happiness would be imperfect without it. Now we may admit in Support of this Paradox, that if there were no vicious Men in the World, we should not want to be protected by civil Government from them. We will also admit that some Advantages may arise to Society from
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from the Vices of Men, either as they occasion good Laws, or awaken a due Execution of them; or as the Example, or Nature of his Punishment may render a Criminal of some Service to the Publick. But then it must be remembred, that these are purely accidental Consequences from Vice: Its natural and proper Effects are all Evil, the very Evils which Government was designed to redress; and the Advantages that any Time happen to arise from it, are owing wholly to the Wisdom and Virtue of those in Authority. Should the Magistrate be so weak or corrupt as to approve and encourage Vice, and leave it without Restraint or Correction, the Effects of it would soon be felt in the Confusion of the Society. But to make short with this Argument, let us ask the Libertine himself, whether he would chuse to live in a Community, where all profess and are without Restraint allowed to gratify every Passion, without any Regard to the Peace or Interests of their Neighbours. If Vice, as he pretends, *i. e.* if Lust and Violence, if Fraud and Rapine be really in themselves beneficial to the Society,

360 *The Advantages of Virtue*

the more they abound the happier must he and every Member of it be: But with whatever Colours he may persuade Authority to connive at his own Vices, I presume he will desire its Protection from the Effects of other Mens. So that even the Vicious themselves, where their Judgment is not corrupted by a Partiality to their own Actions, are in Sentiment with us, and agree to that Conclusion which the Wisdom of all Ages, and the Experience of all Histories affirm to us, That the Peace, Strength, and Happiness of a Society depend on the Justice and Fidelity, the Temperance and Charity of its Members: That these Virtues always render a People flourishing and secure, and the contrary Vices are as constantly productive of Misery and Ruin.

If then these Virtues are acknowledged necessary to social Felicity, Religion must be so too, because no other Principle can offer an equal Inducement to the Practice of them, or equally restrain Men from the opposite Vices. It is in vain to imagine that the Fear of the Magistrate, or political Laws can effectually govern the Acti-

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ons of Men, without the Aid of Religion : For the Duty of obeying these Laws must be deduced from a superior Principle : And he who looks no higher for the Motives of his Conduct than the Resentments of human Justice, whenever he can presume himself cunning enough to elude, rich enough to bribe, or strong enough to resist it, will be under no Restraint from any Action of Treachery, Lust, or Violence, which his Passions suggest.

YET less can we rely on that fantastick Principle called Honour, which has sometimes been pretended to supply the Place of Religion. For if by Honour is meant any Thing distinct from Conscience, it is no more than a Regard to the Censure and Esteem of the World. Now if Men constantly affixed Applause and Disgrace where they ought to do, this Principle would certainly have a very good and extensive Influence on the public Conduct of Men ; though on concealed and secret Villainies it lays no Restraint. But what will be its Effect, if ever any Vice shall become reputable ; if Lewdness, Intemperance,

362 *The Advantages of Virtue*

rance and Oppression shall at any Time be glorified in as Marks of Greatness, and the Distinctions of a superior Character ; what can we then expect from the Man of Honour, but to signalize himself as far as he can by these dignified Accomplishments ? In short, if Honour had forbid Men their Vices, they would have contented themselves with the good old Principles of Conscience and Religion. But when the libertine Part of the World observed that these condemned the Pursuits and Pleasures they were fond of, and withal were so stubborn and inflexible that no Artifice could reconcile them to Vice, they applied themselves to lessen their Authority, decried them as hard and unnecessary Restraints, and proposed Honour or a Concern for Reputation as an equivalent Security for Men's good Behaviour. This they foresaw was a Principle more flexible to their Purpose. The Opinion of the World might be easily altered by Custom and Numbers, by Impudence and Raillery ; and if they could once persuade Mankind to receive this as the only Rule and Measure of their Actions, Vice might

might soon prevail for that Credit and Esteem which upon Principles of Religion could only belong to Virtue. I am unwilling to observe in what Effects this Scheme has succeeded ; but this we may with Confidence affirm, that neither Honour, nor any other Principle that can be imagined, will be found of equal Power to secure the Ends and Interests of Society, with Religion. And this is in Effect acknowledged by its greatest Enemies, who, while they pretend to discredit it as a mere political Contrivance to awe Men into Restraint and Obedience, confess, at the same Time, that the Wisdom of all Ages has concurred in esteeming Religion the only Principle, that could effectually preserve the Peace and Order of Civil Government. From which Confession I will take the Liberty also of this farther Inference, That whoever shall attempt to lessen the Reverence, and weaken the Authority of this Principle, ought to be punished and detested as a public Enemy. What has been observed in these general Reflections, cannot but lead us to assert the Conclusion, That the Man of Virtue and Religion is
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364 *The Advantages of Virtue.*

more excellent, a more valuable Member of Society, and contributes more to its Honour and Happiness, than those of a contrary Character. It will yet appear to us in a fuller Light, if we observe,

II. IN a more particular Application, how Virtue and Religion fit and dispose Men for the most useful Discharge of the several Offices and Relations of social Life. POWER, without Goodness, is the most terrible Idea our Imagination can form; and the more the Authority of any Station in Society is extended, the more it concerns public Happiness that it be committed to Men fearing God, and acting under the Awe of a superior Justice. When we carry our Reflections on this Argument to the supreme civil Power, we may observe that no Prince can ever rely on the Fidelity of that Man who is a Rebel to his Creator: Neither will any human Commands engage him to Justice and Integrity in an Office, whom the Authority of God cannot dispose to these Duties. Parts, Knowledge, and Experience, are indeed excellent Ingredients in a publick Character; of
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equal Use and Ornament to the Seat of Judgment and Counsel : But without Virtue and Religion, these are only Abilities to do Mischief, and give us the Idea of a dangerous Villain. All that Skill which deserves the Name of Wisdom, Religion approves, recommends and teaches. The Rules and Means it prescribes, have generally been found more successful in publick as well as private Affairs, than all the Refinements of irregular Cunning : And I will venture to affirm, that more true political Wisdom may be learned from the holy Scriptures, and even from this single Book of *Proverbs*, than from a thousand such Writers as *Machiavel*. To compass a wicked End, or to render wicked Means successful, that Author has perhaps directed as well as human Subtilty can devise. But a righteous and just End is best promoted by righteous Means, the Way to it lies more obvious and direct, and needs not those Windings of the Serpent to lead us to it. In sum, from a Libertine the Prince is no farther assured of Service, nor the People of Justice, than either his secular Fears or Interest can engage him. But the
Man

366 *The Advantages of Virtue*

Man of Conscience and Religion is under the Influence of Principles which give both the greatest Security. The Prince is in no Danger of being betrayed by the Falseness, or cheated by the Avarice of such a Servant; nor the People of being oppressed by the Tyranny, or undone by the Corruption of such a Ruler. *When the Righteous are exalted, (says Solomon) the City rejoiceth.* Power in such Hands is as the Power of God, by whose Laws it is guided; a Terror only to evil Doers, but the Delight and Confidence of all who do well, and wish the Prosperity of their Country.

BUT I go on to observe, that though Religion and Virtue be more eminently necessary to those in Stations of Authority, yet these Qualities are proportionably conducive to public Happiness, in every inferior Relation of Life: They equally dispose Men to be good Rulers and good Subjects, to be good Parents and good Children, good Masters and good Servants, good Neighbours and good Friends.

I NEED not remind a Christian Audience how eminently these Characters distinguish the holy Religion we profess:

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A Religion which not only forbids, but by its natural Influence sweetens all Bitterness and Asperity of Temper, and corrects that selfish Narrowness of Spirit which inclines Men to a fierce unbenevolent Behaviour; and to which we may justly ascribe those Envies, Jealousies, and Encroachments, which render Mankind uneasy to one another. But by our Religion we are taught and habituated to be meek and humble, to consider the meanest Christian under the endearing Character of a Brother, as equally related to our God and our Redeemer, and born to the same Expectations with ourselves: To be tender of his Peace, and concerned for his Credit and Interest as our own: To be gentle and easy to be intreated, ready to forgive his Offences, and relieve his Distresses: To weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice: To shew Reverence to Superiors, Kindness and Humanity to Equals and Inferiors, and Justice to all. These are the Precepts, and this the natural Genius of our Religion; and whenever it is truly received into the Heart, the Fruits of it will appear

368 *The Advantages of Virtue.*

appear in so lovely an Exercise of Justice, Friendship, and Charity, as will diffuse Peace and Harmony through the World, and mutually reconcile Mankind to each other.

It may perhaps be thought an Objection of Weight against this Doctrine, that our own and other Histories furnish us with Examples of War and Confusion introduced, and the Blood of Princes and Nobles sacrificed to Persuasions of Religion; and that the Cause of so many Evils cannot be so harmless and beneficial a Principle, as we would represent it.

BUT the Answer to this is easy and obvious.

'Tis indeed confessed that wicked and ambitious Men frequently cover over their Pride, Rapine, and Revenge, the real Motives of their Actions, with the venerable Names of Conscience and Religion; and by a Superiority of Craft and Skill, may perhaps prevail on the Weakness and Mistakes of some well-meaning Men to engage in their Designs, under the Persuasions of Conscience and Duty. Every Instance that can be referred to in support of
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this Objection, will upon Examination be resolved into this Account ; and all that can be inferred from it is, that a very good Name may be abused to very bad Purposes. And if this be any just Reproach to Religion, it is what will equally condemn all Laws, and civil Administrations of Justice in the World : For that these have been often abused by Malice, Ignorance, or Knavery, to the Oppression of Innocence, and the Subversion of that Right and Order they were intended to preserve, cannot be denied. But will it hence be inferred, that Laws and Tribunals are destructive to the Peace and Interests of Society ? No better Consequence can be drawn to the Prejudice of Religion from such Examples, where the Authors, who conduct the Mischief, are allowed to have no Religion, and they who assist in it to act in Ignorance, or mistake of its Directions : On the contrary, from these very Instances we conclude to the Advantage of Religion ; since the very Choice of this holy Name, as the most effectual Concealment of a wicked Design, supposes that Mankind are generally satisfied that

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370 *The Advantages of Virtue*

nothing but what is innocent and just is directed by the Rules, or can be acted upon the Principles of it.

AND wherever it is true and sincere, Justice, Meekness, and Fidelity, all the Virtues that can render a Government secure, and the People happy, will be Fruits of it. All the Duties that the best political Laws enjoin, as conducive to the Quiet and Order of social Life, are expressly commanded by our Religion : And all the Crimes they forbid as destructive of publick Happiness, are the repeated Prohibitions of the Gospel ; and consequently our Religion has this Testimony from the wisest Legislators, that it gives the best Directions that can be devised for the general Interest and Felicity of Mankind, only with this great Advantage, that whereas human Laws can reach no farther than to restrain the overt Action, Religion extends to the secret Motions of the Soul, and applies Remedies to the Source and Fountain whence every Vice arises. Attend our Bars, and our Prisons, and let them shew us how much more excellent the Righteous is than his Neighbour. We there
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see who they are that violate the Peace, and disturb the Rights and Comforts of Society: Men unrestrained by the Authority or Prospects of Religion, and, as our Law very justly accounts, for their Crimes, who have not the Fear of God before their Eyes. But from the Good and Just, from those whose Conduct is governed by the Rules of the Gospel, no Injury can arise to Society, and therefore, as the Apostle observes, against such there is no Law.

To these relative Characters, which distinguish the Righteous as more excellent than their Neighbours, I will,

III. Add one more private and personal, but of equal Merit and Value. Their Piety and Devotion, by which the Blessing of God is engaged to the Community.

For let it not be imagined that they contribute nothing to the Happiness of the Country, who only serve God in the Duties of a holy Life; who attend his Sanctuary, and daily address his Goodness to pardon the Sins of the Land, and turn away his Anger from it; to direct and prosper the Counsels, and protect the Persons of

372 *The Advantages of Virtue*

those who act in the publick Administration. If we own a God and a Providence, we cannot but acknowledge the Dependence of Success in all human Affairs on his Concurrence. And since God in these Dispensations acts as a Judge and Governor of the World, these Marks of his Favour or Displeasure must have the Nature of Rewards and Punishments, and be proportioned to the Neglect or Observance of his Laws. And for the same Reasons that a righteous and godly People will be entitled to Honour and Happiness, and a wicked exposed to Contempt and Misery, righteous and good Men ought to be esteemed a Strength and Defence to their Country, and wicked Men a Reproach and Weakness to it. For, as *Solomon* says, *By the Blessing of the Upright the City is exalted; but it is overthrown by the Mouth of the Wicked**.

AND this national Merit of the Righteous will still farther appear in the Comparison, if we observe from the Declarations of God, and the Histories of his Providence, that the Piety of good Men more effectually prevails for his Blessing upon a Nation,

* Prov. xi. 11.

Nation, than the Sins of wicked Men provoke his Resentment. So great is the Compassion of God, that in the Execution of his Judgments he never visits a People with publick and general Calamities, but where their Sins are publick and national too: But his Mercy is pleased to regard the Virtue and Prayers of a much smaller Proportion, to suffer their Piety to atone for the Guilt, and suspend the Punishment due to a far greater Number of wicked Men. Thus in that Conference with which God honoured the Patriarch *Abraham*, when he had determined the Overthrow of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, he assures him, that *if but ten righteous Men* could have been found in those Cities, though the Cry of their Iniquity reached unto Heaven, yet the Hand of his destroying Angel had been stayed, and the whole Multitude of the Ungodly spared for the Sake of so small a Number. His Hand was stayed 'till *Lot* was in a Place of Safety. *Make haste, (says the Angel) and escape thither, for I can do nothing 'till thou art come thither* *.

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* Gen. xix, 22.

374 *The Advantages of Virtue*

And we see the single Intercession of that righteous Man prevailed for the Deliverance of one even of those devoted Cities.

AND though, when God denounces the irrevocable Sentence of his Wrath, against the Idolatry of *Judah*, he tells them, that though *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job*, were among them, they should not reverse the Judgment he had passed upon their Sins; yet the very Mention of this by the Prophet, as the greatest Argument of the Immutability of his Purpose, supposes that generally the Piety and Intercession of three such Men would appease the Anger of God; that this was the most effectual Address that could be made to the divine Compassion, and if they had sinned beyond the Power of such an Application, their Case was desperate and past Remedy.

UPON the whole then, let us recollect from what a Variety of Reasons we are forced to approve the Conclusion in my Text, and confess the Righteous more excellent than his Neighbour. We have seen that the Graces of his Religion prepare him for the most useful Discharge of every Relation of Life, equally to adorn the
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the Seat of Authority himself, and to render it easy to others ; dispose him to those Virtues, which by their natural Influence spread Chearfulness and Pleasure, Amity and Confidence, through human Society ; and lastly, that his Piety and Prayers are a continual Guard to his Country, derive the Blessings of God upon it, and avert his Judgments from it.

SINCE therefore we all pretend a Concern for the Prosperity of our Country, let our Zeal for it appear in our Endeavours to promote Virtue and Religion. Let us constantly distinguish the Righteous, by that Honour and Respect which is due to so excellent a Character. By this we shall give Beauty and Lustre to his Example, and enable him by increasing the Number of the Good, to add daily to our Happiness and Security. Above all, let our Care begin at Home : Let us each in our Stations govern our Lives by the Rules of our holy Religion, and practise those Virtues ourselves, whose Excellence we acknowledge in others. And let us unite in our Prayers to God, that by the holy Influences of his Spirit he would guide and sanctify every

376 *The Advantages of, &c.*

Rank and Order of Men among us, that the Wisdom which is from above, that Righteousness, Holiness, and Mercy, may be the Ornament of our Superiors, and be acknowledged in universal Honour and Imitation.

THEN shall Peace be within our Walls, and Plenteousness within our Palaces, and no Complaining be heard in our Streets, God shall be merciful to us, and bless us, and under his Protection we shall be safe and happy.





S E R M O N XVIII.

A prudent Conduct and Behaviour
in Christians recommended and
inforced.



ROM. xii. 17. latter Part.

*Provide Things honest in the Sight of
all Men.*

IF it was necessary to exhort
Christians to an holy unblame-
able Life in the Age in which
the Apostles wrote, when all
who professed the Gospel were Converts of
Conscience, when the Terrors of Persecution
and

and the daily Expectation of Death gave the Motives to Obedience the strongest and most lively Impression on their Minds, much more must it be necessary when that primitive Zeal is decayed, when the Religion of many is no more than a Compliance with a fashionable Profession, and the outward Security of the Church has produced a careless Indolence, a Deadness and Inactivity of Spirit among the generality of Christians. It may, perhaps, be thought, that the Intention of this Precept was principally to guard against the Malice and Detraction of the professed Enemies of the Gospel, who were then numerous, prejudiced against it by strong Aversions, ready to triumph over every Miscarriage in the Conduct of its Disciples, and improve every Failing into an Argument of Reproach and Discredit to the Faith they professed: But that under a general Reception of Christianity, we may expect a candid and favourable Interpretation of all our Actions; and where all are equally concerned for the publick Honour of our Profession, none will be inclined to reflect to its Disadvantage the Defects of Particulars,

culars, which the Principles of our Religion are well known to disallow; and therefore the great Reason for that Strictness and Caution ceasing, it need not now be inculcated to Men. But alas! this Reason for the Precept holds still with too much Force: The Gospel has still its Enemies among us open and barefac'd, disputing and ridiculing every Article of its Faith, and vigilant over every Advantage by which they may expose it to the Scorn or Aversion of Mankind. The weekly, and even daily Invectives we hear or read against all who minister in the Offices of our Religion, or who with any Zeal and Reverence attend them, are too plain a Conviction that our Religion wants not Enemies, nor those Enemies Spight and Malice against it; and consequently this Reason persuades the Conduct here recommended, with as much Force as it could do in any Age of the Gospel. We are still concerned to be upon our Guard, and by a prudent and exemplary Behaviour cut off all Occasion from those who seek Occasion, that they may have whereof to accuse us. But should we set this Consideration

deration aside, the Duty here enjoined will ever oblige, as the most effectual Means to restrain the Growth of Vice and Wickedness, and promote the Practice of Virtue and Piety among Men. Wicked Men there ever were, and ever will be in the World ; but so long as they can be kept under the Restraint of Shame and Singularity, the publick Reverence and Practice of Religion will not be much affected by them : But if once they can dare to appear openly and undisguised, when they can take up the Seat of the Scorners, defy Censure, and turn the Ridicule upon Seriousness and Piety, the Contagion spreads like a Pestilence, and prevails as a Fashion, and the weak and modest grow ashamed to appear in the Habit of Virtue. To prevent or redress this Evil, the Command in my Text is a most effectual Prescription, *Provide Things honest in the Sight of all Men.* That it may have its due Weight and Influence on our Practice, I shall,

I. *First*, CONSIDER the Extent and Import of it ; and,

II. *Se-*

II. *Secondly*, SET before you the Motives which recommend it to your Conscientious Observance.

I. THE plain Meaning of this Precept is, that we should have a strict Regard to our outward Behaviour and Conversation, to every Part of our Conduct which is publick, and subject to the Notice and Observation of Men. We should weigh and consider with ourselves in what Light our Actions will appear, how far they may probably mislead the Judgment, or influence the Practice of others: And therefore we are to provide Things honest, to consider not only the internal Rectitude of our Actions in the Sight of God, but whether they will be free from all Mark or Suspicion of Evil. Nay, 'tis not enough that they are barely inoffensive to Men, but they must be honest, of good Report, such as will engage Esteem and Observance, and adorn that holy Principle from which they proceed.

As Things of this Character must be provided, so they must be provided in the
Sight

Sight of all Men, Inferior as well as Superior, Enemies as well as Friends, the Infidel as well as the Christian. Our Conduct must be such as may not only be attended with the Approbation and Applause of good Men, but it must be ordered with such Prudence, as may silence the Reproaches, engage the Reverence, and tend to the Conviction of the Libertine himself.

BUT to avoid Mistakes in the Practice of this Duty, it is necessary, that we distinguish between those Acts of Piety and Virtue which we ought to keep close to ourselves, and those in whose Performance we are required to be open and visible. For in this Injunction the Apostle did not intend to contradict his Master, or recommend a Practice which he with so much Severity reprov'd in the *Pharisees*, the doing their Alms before Men, loving to pray standing in the Synagogues and Corners of the Streets, affecting the Praise and Admiration of Men, and, in order to acquire it, performing those Acts of Piety and Devotion openly, which ought to have been done secretly and in the Closet.

Much

Much less did he design to encourage our Vanity and Ostentation, in counterfeiting any Part of Religion ; it is not his Meaning that we should sound a Trümpet before us as the Hypocrites do, that we should study to appear better, or even so good as we are, merely to procure the good Opinion and Praise of Men : Still less that we put on the outward Face and Semblance of Virtue, only to conceal and disguise our Vice, that we may with more Security and less Suspicion, indulge our secret Lusts, and execute our wicked Purposes, and be, in our Lord's Comparifon, like whited Sepulchres, which appear beautiful outwardly, but within are full of dead Mens Bones, and all Uncleanneffes. But that under a fair and beautiful Appearance, there should ever be the real Substance of Good ; that an honest Intention of Heart, and an upright Conscience, should always be at the Bottom of a good Conversation ; and the outward and apparent Sanctity of our Actions, should flow from the Purity of our Heart and Affections.

BUT

BUT least of all does this Precept imply, that we should do any Evil to gain the Favour and Approbation of Men, or comply with any Thing that the Prevalence of corrupt Fashion has made reputable. When such an Overflowing of Ungodliness shall prevail, that Men shall glory in what ought to be their Shame, when the Distinctions of Good and Evil are confounded, when Virtue is exposed to the Reproach of Vice, and Vice honoured with the Applause of Virtue; to please Men upon these Terms, and provide what in so corrupt a Judgment may be called honest, would be a direct Contradiction to this Command of the Apostle.

THIS Precept then, under its proper Limitations, will oblige us with a pure and unaffected Sincerity to perform our Duty, according to the Nature and Exigence of the various Branches of it.

THERE are some Works of Piety, whose Nature, as was insinuated, requires that we should be reserved in the Practice of them. Such with which the World is not immediately concerned, or which may with more spiritual Advantage be transacted

acted between God and our own Souls. Such are private Devotion, Meditation on God's Holy Word, the Examination of our own Consciences, and voluntary Acts of Penitence: To which we may add particular Deeds of Charity in dispensing Alms, and more especially in the friendly Re-proof of our Neighbour. These Duties our Lord has taught us to perform in secret, industriously to conceal our Observance of them from the Eyes of Men, that we may avoid Vanity and Hypocrisy in ourselves, or giving Offence to our Neighbour by a just Suspicion of it. *Take Heed* (says he) *that you do not your Alms before Men; when thou prayest, enter into thy Closet; when thou fastest, anoint thy Head, and wash thy Face, that thou appear not unto Men to fast* *. *And if thy Brother sin against thee, tell him of his Faults between thee and him alone* †.

BUT when the Profession of our holy Faith, and the Acknowledgment of the Truths or Hopes revealed to us in the Gospel is the Instance of our Duty; when we are called upon to join in publick Ado-

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ration,

* Matt. vi. 1, 6, 17. † Matt. xvii. 15.

ration, whereby the Reverence of God is upheld in the World, or to bear our Part in Acts of publick Humiliation ; or when a just Zeal in Vindication of God's Honour from the Blasphemies of the Prophane, or the Scandal of Actions openly wicked and irreligious, is required at our Hands, these Duties in the very nature of them require a publick and observable Performance : If we do them at all, they must be seen of Men. But in other Parts also of our moral or religious Conduct, and even in those in which we are sometimes, and perhaps generally obliged to study Concealment, it may in some Circumstances be our bounden Duty to distinguish ourselves by the most open and remarkable Practice. As when any Duty is fallen under a general Difuse and Neglect, in such a Case the most visible and exemplary Performance is required ; and to hide our Light under a Bushel, and content ourselves with our private Virtue, is being ashamed of *Christ*.

IN every Action of our Lives indeed our first and principal Care should be to approve our Consciences to God, who sees
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in secret ; the Interest, the Credit or Reputation that may attend them are no farther to be received among the Motives of our Conduct, than as they may promote the Glory of God. *We must be* (as the Apostle directs) *the Servants of Christ, doing the Will of God heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto Men, knowing that of the Lord we shall receive the Reward of the Inheritance* * : But at the same Time we are to remember, that being exemplary before Men, is a Duty also commanded by God, under the same Penalties and Obligations with his other Laws : These Duties are certainly consistent with each other, and we may do the one without leaving the other undone ; and therefore the Performance of the one, will not excuse the Omission of the other.

II. THE Motives which recommend the Precept in my Text to our conscientious Observance, are what I proposed Secondly to consider.

AND here the first Motive that occurs to us, is the manifest Tendency of such a

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* Col. iii. 23, 24.

388 *A prudent Conduct*

Conduct to promote the Glory of God, the great End of every Creature, high and low, animate or inanimate, and which every intelligent Being is bound to consult by a direct and intentional Service; the constant Employment of *Cherubim* and *Seraphim*, and all the Company of Heaven; and which Man is particularly commanded to propose in all his Actions. Whatsoever we do, we are to do all Things to the Glory of God. Now the Glory of God is in the most eminent Manner promoted by a visible and exemplary Obedience to his Laws, both as such a Conduct is in itself the most expressive Acknowledgment of the Majesty and Sovereignty of God, and as it disposes others to glorify him by the same Observances. Our retired Acts of Piety and Devotion are indeed expressive of our personal Honour and Subjection to the Deity, and as such are accepted and approved by him to whose Eyes all Things are open; but he requires also, that we should honour him before Men, and give Occasion to those who are Witnesses of our Actions, to glorify his holy Name, which can only be done by a publick and visible Practice of Duty.

Duty. By this we manifest to the World our firm Persuasion of the Being and Providence of God, our Reverence to his Majesty, Authority, and Power, and our Trust in his Goodness and Promises : And while by these Acts we each in his own Person give Honour unto God, we excite all who behold our good Works, to glorify his holy Name by the same Services. For a virtuous Example equally directs and persuades to Duty : It affords the clearest and most intelligible Instruction, and the Persuasion with which it acts upon our natural Passions can hardly be resisted. None can behold an uniform Practice of Virtue and Piety without Respect and Esteem ; and what we admire in another's Character, we cannot but wish a Part of our own. The very Regret of being surpassed in any valuable Quality, by a Person of the same Abilities with ourselves, and no otherwise assisted than we either are, or by our Prayers to God may be, will reproach our own Laziness and Imperfection, and even shame us into Imitation. So that Examples of Sobriety, and Holiness, and Religion, promote the Glory of God, not on-

ly as they induce Men to think reverently of his Laws and Authority, and to bless that Goodness which has given such Graces to Men, but also as they influence publick Practice, and dispose others to glorify his Name by their Conversion to Righteousness. And agreeably this Motive to exemplary Obedience, is frequently urged by the Holy Ghost in Scripture. Thus St. Paul exhorts the * *Philippians*, to be filled with the Fruits of Righteousness, unto the Praise and Glory of God. Thus does he put up his Supplications for the *Thessalonians* †, that God would fulfil all the good Pleasure of his Goodness, and the Work of Faith with Power, that the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified in them. Thus also does St. Peter ‡ exhort all Christians to have their Conversation honest among the Gentiles, that they might by their good Works, which they should behold, glorify God in the Day of Visitation. This he declares to be one great Design of the Christian Institution. To this End were we made a chosen Generation,

* Phil. i. 11. † 2 Thess. i. 11, 12. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 12.

recommended and enforced. 391

neration, a royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, a peculiar People, that we should shew forth the Praises of him who called us out of Darknes into his marvellous Light.* On the contrary, a prophane and irreligious Example does an open Dishonour to God. In the Person himself, it speaks a Defiance of his Power and Justice, and a Contempt of his Goodness and Promises ; it encourages others in the same Impieties, and gives Occasion to the Enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

ANOTHER Inducement to the Conduct here prescribed, we may take from the Credit and Esteem it will derive on our Profession. This Motive indeed is co-incident with the former, so far as the Honour done to our Religion ultimately redounds to God the Author of it : But as this applies to a particular Passion in our Nature, it may deserve a distinct Consideration. Every Man feels in himself a strong Desire that the Religion he has chosen, and under whose Influence he professes to act, may not only be free from Reproach, but

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* 1 Pet. ii. 9.

appear venerable in the Eyes of Men. Now nothing will so effectually recommend it under this Character, as a remarkable Sanctity, Meekness, Justice, and Charity in the Lives of its Disciples; the Practice of these Virtues natural Reason cannot but approve, and the Excellency of the Fruit will reflect Honour on the holy Root from whence it springs. When Men see us renounce our Lusts and Interests in Obedience to our Religion, it is a Conviction to them that we are in earnest in our Profession, that the Expectations of our Faith are something great and valuable, and firmly assured to our Hopes; when our Religion appears under these Characters, it cannot but engage Esteem and Reverence, as most agreeable to the Dignity, and most conducive to the general Interests of Mankind.

ON the other Hand, vicious and immoral Examples among Christians, reflect Disgrace and Scandal on their Religion. For though the Argument will not hold in just Reasoning, there are wicked Men among Christians, therefore the Religion they profess is a wicked Religion: Yet the
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Generality of Mankind, who are not used to much Abstraction, are exceedingly apt to judge by this Rule; and in the Case of Scandal, we are concerned to reflect not only how Men ought reasonably to judge, but how in Probability they will judge, and avoid such a Conduct as may lay a stumbling Block before weak Men, and give Occasion to the Adversary to speak reproachfully.

To the Love of our Religion, we may join also the Love of our Country, as recommending the Conduct here advised. For since the Happiness of every Community manifestly depends on the Virtues and good Behaviour of its Members, and publick Examples of Duty by a most effectual Influence dispose others to the same Observances; it follows that we can by no Service more eminently promote the Honour and Prosperity of our Country. And this Argument will appear yet stronger, when we consider such Examples as engaging the Protection, and deriving the Blessings of Almighty God on our Land. We have Instances in the History of Providence, when the Integrity of a few, nay of one
Person

Person has appeased the divine Anger, and with-held imminent Ruin from a People. Thus did the Piety of *Moses* stand in the Gap, and turn away the Displeasure of God from *Israel*. Thus would the Righteousness of ten Persons have saved even *Sodom* from Destruction. And thus does God declare by his Prophet *Jeremy*, that one good Man might have prevented the Vengeance he denounced against *Israel*: *Run ye to and fro* (says he) *through the Streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad Places thereof, if there be any that executeth Judgment, and seeketh Truth, and I will pardon it **. And thus by his Prophet *Ezekiel*: *I sought for a Man* (says God) *among them that should make up the Hedge, and stand in the Gap before me for the Land that I should not destroy it, but I found none, therefore I poured mine Indignation upon them †*.

ONE Consideration more I will here suggest, which affords great Encouragement to good Men to distinguish themselves by such a Conversation as the Apostle prescribes,

* Jer. v. 1.

† Ezek. xxii. 30, 31.

prescribes, which is, that it will be the most probable Means of restraining the Contempt and Insolence of wicked Men, and rendering a Course of Duty more easy and comfortable to them. From this kind of Affliction indeed, we can never hope to be perfectly freed in this World : He who is born after the Flesh, will always vex and persecute him who is born after the Spirit ; but by such a Conduct good Men will be distinguished, and enabled mutually to support and countenance each other. The Beauties of Holiness, when thus laid open to Light and Observation, will irresistibly gain it Converts, and Numbers will establish it as a Fashion. The Libertine will no longer glory in his Impieties, but content himself with private Wickedness, and even be forced to pay Reverence to Examples of Virtue.

UPON the Whole, the Motives that have been offered in Recommendation of this Duty, are such as I assure myself have Weight with every good Man ; and what ought to give them the most quick and lively Influence on us, is the prevailing Corruption of the Age in which we live.

If

If the Duty here commanded be at all Times necessary, more especially is it so when Blasphemy, Infidelity, and every Vice reigns in open Triumph. If our Regard to the Honour of God requires this Conduct from us, more especially should it do so, when his Name, his Word, his Ministers, and his Service, are treated with open Scorn and Ridicule. If the Recovery of Sinners, and giving Countenance to good Men, are Ends which persuade our Obedience to this Precept; more especially should they prevail when Iniquity abounds, and the Love of many is grown cold, borne down by the Torrent of overflowing Ungodliness. If the Regard to our Country, and a Desire to avert the Judgments of God from it, recommend to us this Duty; they can never do it more forceably than when the Trespases of a People are grown up to Heaven, and their Sins are got beyond all Restraints of Laws and Authority.

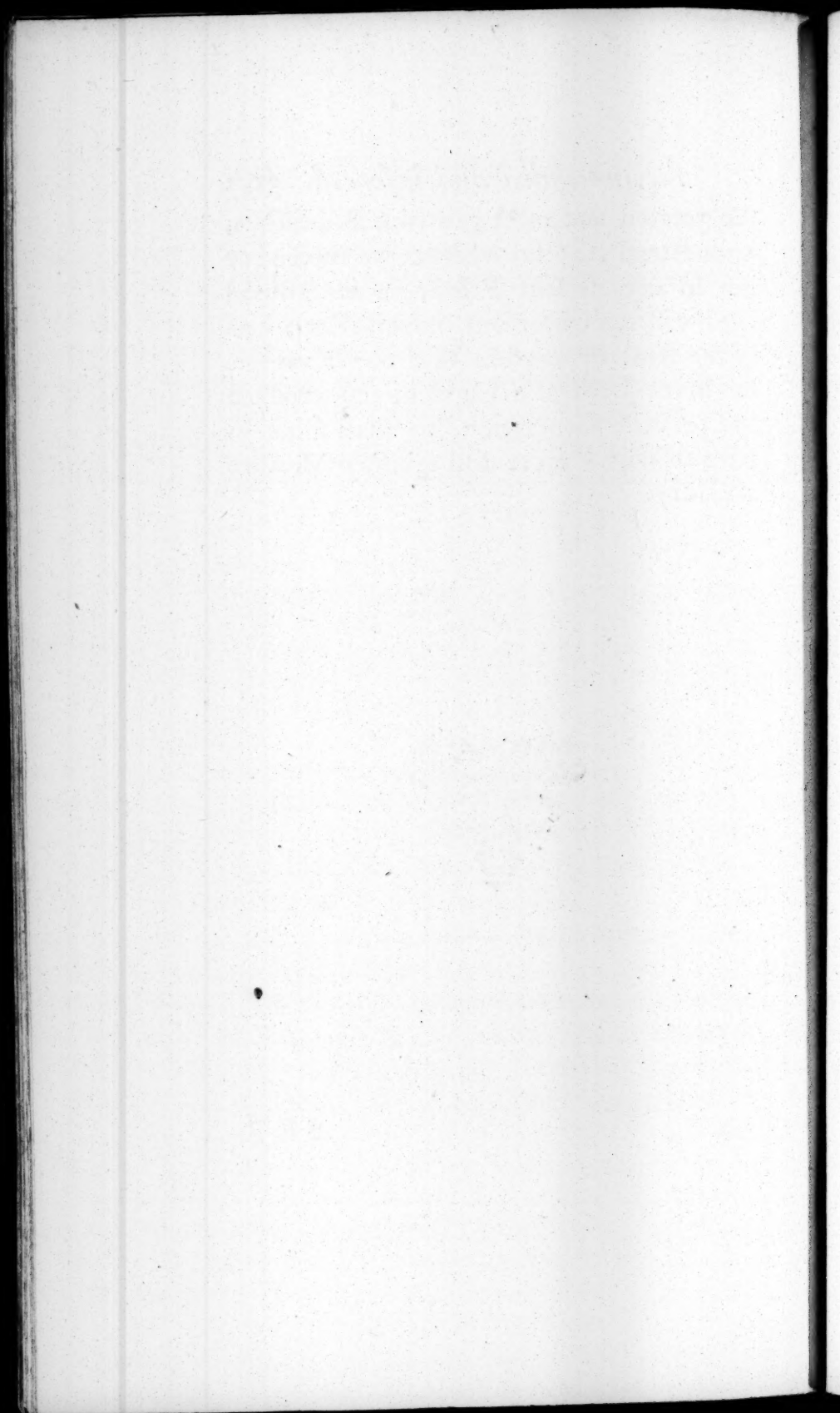
THESE are Considerations which should awaken our Zeal, and engage us immediately to set about the good Work recommended to us. If our Endeavours succeed
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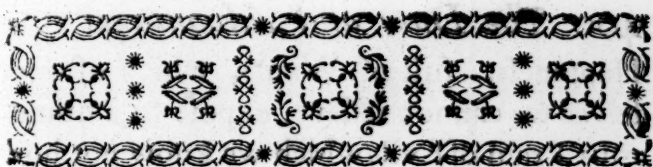
recommended and inforced. 397

the greatest and most generous Satisfaction must attend it: But whether we succeed or not in any present Effect, be we assured God will remember our honest Zeal, and in the same Proportion that our Example has shone forth as a Light in this crooked and perverse Generation, we shall shine in Heaven with a more distinguished Measure of Glory.



S E R.





S E R M O N XIX.

The Duty and Advantages of Trust
in God.



J E R E M. xvii. 7.

*Blessed is he that trusteth in the
Lord, and whose Hope the Lord
is.*

   H E N E V E R we reflect on the
 W  Powers of our Nature, and the
  Circumstances of our Being,
 some of the first Conclusions
that arise to us are, that we are a weak de-
pendent Creature, insufficient to our own
Hap-

400 *The Duty and Advantages*

Happiness, full of Wants, which of ourselves we cannot relieve, expose to a numerous Train of Evils which we know not how to divert, insecure in the Possession of the present, and anxious for the future, and therefore that some foreign Support is necessary to us, on which we may stay and rest ourselves with Confidence of being supplied with what we want, and protected from what we fear; a Reflection so obvious, that natural Instinct seems to have suggested it even to those who never much attended to Deductions of Reason. In every Man's Scheme of Happiness we shall find upon Enquiry some special Point of Confidence; something without himself he relies on to be his Guard and Assistance, to furnish to him the Materials of his Happiness, and defend him in the Fruition of it. Thus we may observe some placing this Confidence in the Power, Influence, and Authority of their Station; others with the rich Fool in the Gospel, trust in their Riches, and pronounce Rest to their Souls in the Multitude of their Treasures; others on their Parts and Abilities, their Skill in designing, and their Management in Execution.

cution. These Instances may perhaps seem at first View rather to refute than enforce my Observation, that Man naturally seeks a Strength and Refuge in something without himself; for the Object of Trust here, is either our own natural or acquired Powers, or at least something domestick and in our Possession. But if we go on in the Reflection but one Step farther, all these Schemes must appear to us ultimately to resolve into a Confidence in Man: For of what Advantage are Power, or Skill, or Riches to us, but as they enable us to command, engage, or purchase the Services of other Men? The Great and the Rich depend on the Assistances of those whom their Power or their Wealth attaches to them; and their Inferiors strengthen themselves in the Favour and Friendship of the Great, which they presume their Services or Address will assure to them, and the whole Skill of each is employed in cultivating and improving these Advantages.

BUT if we suffer ourselves to reason upon such a Conduct, and examine the Grounds of this Confidence, it must appear weak and treacherous in the Founda-

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402 *The Duty and Advantages*

tion ; for what is Man, even the greatest of Men, whose Breath is in his Noftrils, a Creature frail and indigent as ourselves, whose Powers, whose very Life is limited within narrow Bounds, and whose Affections change as the Wind? The greater and more formidable Part of the Evils we are exposed to are such, as it is above the Abilities of Man to prevent or redress ; and even where it is in his Power to serve us, we can have no firm Assurance of his Inclinations to do it. Here then we cannot sit down, but must still proceed in our Search, and look higher for a Support equal to our Wants : And though, as we pass through the several Orders of Beings above us, we discern many Excellencies, and cannot but desire the Favour and Assistance of Natures so much superior to our own, yet still there appears a Mixture of Weakness and Imperfection ; we are not yet arrived at what we want, neither can we rest with a full Trust and Satisfaction 'till we come where Religion directs us ; to a Being infinite in Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, to God the Author and Governor

nor

nor of every Creature, who can restrain the Malice, and command the Service, overrule the Powers, and direct the Actions of all inferior Beings. If we can assure to ourselves the Favour of this mighty Being, our Concern is at an End ; we may here repose ourselves with a full Affiance, as on a Refuge sure and stedfast, in whose Hand are all Events, whose Wisdom can foresee, and whose Power can divert every Evil that may approach us, and whose Veracity has declared that he will never fail those who put their Trust in him. This Trust and Confidence in God, as it is our greatest Felicity, so it is also our bounden Duty enjoined us by Religion, as a Condition of that Favour and Protection we expect from him ; and therefore this Subject will oblige me to consider,

I. **WHAT** the Duty here required from us implies, or when we may be said to Hope and Trust in God, as we ought to do.

II. **WHEN** this Trust is grounded as it ought to be, or what Conditions are
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404 *The Duty and Advantages*

required on our Part to assure our Confidence in God.

III. THE Blessedness of him who can thus trust and hope in the Lord.

I. THEN this Trust in God is an Honour we owe to the Supremacy of the divine Nature, and it is a Degree of Idolatry to place it on any other Being. This Duty implies positively an entire Resignation to the Wisdom, a Dependance on the Power, and a firm Assurance of the Goodness and Veracity of God: On him we must ultimately rely to supply us with all Things needful and proper for us, to give Food to our Bodies, and Pardon and Grace to our Souls. Whatever our Condition or the Events of our Life may be, though our temporal Prospects should be full of Danger, or though the Days of Sorrow should actually overtake us, yet still we must repose ourselves on God, as a Being who loves us as his Children, who even corrects us with the Mercy of a Father, and will in the End make all things work together for our Good. *Though he slay me*
(says

(says *Job*) yet *I will trust in him**; nay, though we are conscious to ourselves that we have offended him by our Sins, though we have provoked him to withdraw the Comforts of his holy Spirit, and hide his Face from us, yet still we must not let go our Trust in him, but look up from the Deep into which we are fallen, and depend on the Promises he has made us through *Christ*, that he will forgive the Penitent, and receive him again to Mercy and Favour.

NEGATIVELY this Duty implies, that we should withdraw our Confidence from all inferior Beings; and in order to this we must begin at home, put off all Trust in ourselves, our Parts, Abilities or Acquisitions, how great or how many soever they may be. This Trust indeed, in our own natural or acquired Powers, as I before observed, ultimately terminates in the Friendship and Services of other Men, which these Advantages are presumed to assure to us. But no Man, or Number of Men, how mighty, how good, or how virtuous soever, or whatever Presumption

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* *Job* xiii. 15.

406 *The Duty and Advantages*

we may have of their Engagements or Inclination to us, must be suffered to rival God in the Honour of our Confidence; for him has the Holy Spirit pronounced accursed, *who trusteth in Man, and maketh Flesh his Arm, and whose Heart departeth from the Lord**. And though the blessed Angels far excel Man in Power and Wisdom, and we have far greater Assurances of their Goodness and Benevolence towards us, yet our Trust must not rest in them: Even these glorious Beings must be considered by us as our Fellow-servants, as Instruments only in the Hand of God, who applies their Services, governs all their Actions, and disposes even their Wills and Affections according to his good Pleasure. But the greatest Offence against this Duty, is placing our Confidence in the Enemies of God, in evil Men or evil Spirits. When we pay this Regard to the Angels of God, we are guilty indeed of a criminal Mistake, we honour the Servant instead of the Master; but they are Servants of great Dignity, and to whom some Respect is due from us, and therefore the

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* Jer. xvii. 5.

Error may admit some Alleviation: But when we have Recourse to the Powers of Darkneſs, we declare ourſelves Affociates with the profeſſed Rebels againſt God and his *Chriſt*, we deliberately renounce the Allegiance we have ſworn to him. In ſum, the whole Syſtem of Creatures muſt be excluded from this Honour: Though we are permitted to rejoice in the Poſſeſſion of any valuable Advantages, to cultivate the Friendſhip and engage the Benevolence of Men and Angels; yet our Confidence muſt not terminate here, but be carried on to God, from whoſe Bounty we receive, and at whoſe Pleaſure we hold every Bleſſing we enjoy; whoſe Appointment every Creature, good or Evil, is bound to obey; who only is mighty, who only is the Lord, who alone has Power to ſave, and Power to deſtroy. Let us then,

II. CONSIDER when this Truſt is grounded as it ought to be, or what Conditions are required on our Part to aſſure our Confidence in the Favour and Protection of God.

408 *The Duty and Advantages*

FOR as, with respect to the Duty of Prayer, the proper Means of obtaining from God, the Blessings we trust in him for, though it be a bounden Service we all owe to the Lord of Heaven and Earth, yet certain Qualifications are on our Parts necessary to give our Prayers any just Expectation of Success ; so likewise in this Trust itself, though it be an Homage due from us to God, as his Subjects and Creatures, yet unless we are duly qualified for his Favour, our Trust will be a vain and sinful Presumption. Now the great and most important Qualification for a successful Performance of these Duties, is a sincere Obedience to the Laws of God, an unfeigned Devotion of the Heart to his Service, a steady Adherence to the Faith, and a Purity and Holiness of Life agreeable to the Precepts of our Religion : Wicked Men have no Interest in the Promises of God, but are the Objects of his Wrath and Displeasure. When *Rabshakeh* was sent to terrify the People of *Jerusalem*, he argues from this Principle against their Confidence in God. *If ye say we trust in the Lord our God, is not that he whose Al-*
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tars Hezekiah *has cast down* *? Had his Suggestion been true, that *Hezekiah* had abolished the Worship of God and the Religion he had established among them, the *Assyrian* had reasoned justly; a Prince and People in such manifest Rebellion against their God, could not expect that he should appear in their Defence, or rescue them from the Calamity that hung over them; but that excellent Prince was conscious to himself of his own Integrity, of his honest Zeal and Uprightness of Life in the Service of God, and relied on this as a sure Foundation for that Trust he reposed in him, to deliver him out of all his Distresses, *Remember* (says he) *O Lord, how I have walked before thee in Truth, and with a perfect Heart, and have done that which was good in thy Sight* †. We must examine our Lives, and be assured that our Ways please the Lord, before we can hope for his favourable Interposition; *for his Eyes are over the Righteous, and his Ears are open to their Prayers; but the Ungodly, and him that delighteth in Wickedness,*
doth

* 2 Kings xviii. 22.

† 2 Kings xx. 3.

410 *The Duty and Advantages*

*doth his Soul abhor. If our Heart condemn us not (says the Apostle) than have we Confidence towards God** But if our Conscience reproach us with unmortified Sin, if we have neglected his Service, been deaf to his Calls, and despised his Authority, our Hope is the Hope of the Hypocrite, we may call and none will answer, yea he will laugh when our Sorrow comes. One Refuge nevertheless remains to the Sinner, the last and only Anchor of his Hope. Let him put away the Evil of his Doings, and humble himself by a speedy and sincere Repentance : Let him return to God whom he has forsaken, and then let him be assured that God will return to him, will take him again into his Protection, will be reconciled to him through *Christ*, and restore him to the Confidence of a Son.

III. THE Blessedness of him who can thus trust and hope in the Lord, is the third Thing I proposed to consider.

IF we would draw a short Abstract of human Happiness, bring together all the various

* 1 John iii. 21.

ous Ingredients of it, and digest them into one Prescription, we must at last fix on this wise and religious Aphorism in my Text, as the Sum and Comprehension of all. Every other Scheme we can form appears upon Examination weak and defective, perplexed and intricate in the Project, full of Difficulties in the Execution, and precarious in the Issue, depending for Success on the Concurrence of Beings either frail and perishing in their Nature, confined in their Power, or uncertain in their Wills and Inclinations; and if any of these Circumstances fail us, and none of them can be relied on, the whole Scheme is broken, all our Plots and Contrivances, the Pains we have taken, and the Skill and Address we have shewn in the Conduct of them, come all to nothing, and leave us to Disappointment and Despair. But he who with a just Confidence can trust in God is secure from these Contingencies. He relies on a Wisdom who sees the utmost Consequence of things, on a Power which nothing can obstruct, on a Goodness of infinite Affection to his Happiness, and who has bound himself by Promise never to fail

412 *The Duty and Advantages*

fail those who trust in him. If this God be with us, who or what can be against us? But if he be angry, all our other Dependances will profit us nothing, our Strength will be but Weakness, and our Wisdom Folly; every other Support will fail under us when we come to lean upon it, and deceive us in the Day when we want it most.

SHOULD we carry our Enquiry no farther than after present Felicity, how much better is it secured to the Man who trusts in God, than to him whose Dependance is on the Creature? The Hope of the former is founded on a Rock, his Soul dwells at Ease, secure in the Skill, the Power, and the Affection of his Governor, calm and unconcerned in all his Pursuits: He commits the Event of them to God, who perfectly knows what is best for him, and is both able and willing to do more than he can ask or think; the present Bounties of Providence he enjoys with a chearful Content, without any anxious Solicitude for the future. If Things happen contrary to his Wish or Expectation, he supports himself with reflecting,
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that 'tis the Appointment of infinite Wisdom and infinite Goodness, of one who sees that the Success he desired would, in some Respect or other, prove a greater Disappointment to him. In the Days of Danger he is without Fear, his Heart standeth fast and will not shrink. Neither the Rage of Men, nor the Malice of Devils are terrible to him. Though the Kings of the Earth stand up, and the Rulers take Counsel together against him; or though the Madness of the People be gathered about him, yet he knows that all these Things are under the Direction of his Friend, whose Power ruleth over all, and sets them their Bounds which they cannot pass; who can in a Moment either still the Tempest, or divert it from him, and with his favourable Kindness defend him as with a Shield. Nay, even in the severest Afflictions he is attended with Reflections full of Comfort: He knows that all the Powers of Earth or Hell cannot distress him beyond the Ability of God to deliver him; cannot exclude him from his Presence, or hinder his Recourse to him; that whatever he suffers

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414 *The Duty and Advantages*

comes upon him by his Permission, who does not willingly grieve his Creatures, but has wise and gracious Ends in all his Dispensations, though they may not presently appear to us; that it may be well for him that he is troubled, either for the Exercise and Improvement of his Virtues, his Patience and Fortitude; or perhaps it may be the necessary Means of deriving to him even some present Advantage of greater Value than it takes from him. In sum, he relies on his God, either to remove the Burden, or to enable him to bear it, or to make him Amends for what he endures under it.

BUT how different from this is his Condition whose Trust is in the Creature; Vexation and Uneasiness attend him in every Stage and Event of Life; his Pursuits are disquieted with perpetual Fear lest the fickle Powers he relies on should deceive him, or some Accident should disable them from serving him. Success, indeed, may give him a present Flush of Joy; but when the short Transport is over, and he begins to consider the precarious Tenure by which he holds his Attainment,

tainment, the Apprehension of losing succeeds to the Care of acquiring, and the same Anxiety and Solitude that embittered the Pursuit, disrelishes the Fruition itself. But when Danger becomes imminent, when the Clouds are gathered around him, and are ready to burst upon his Head, he then finds the Vanity of his Confidence ; Fearfulness and Trembling come upon him, and his Heart within him is like melting Wax ; distracted and irresolute in his Counsels, and diffident of every Recourse. But if the Day of Adversity actually overtakes him, he is then completely miserable ; he flies from Strength to Strength, from one Dependance to another, but he finds them all either weak or treacherous ; the Wealth, the Honours in which he gloried, avail him nothing ; and even the Friend of his Bosom, on whose Fidelity and Assistance he most relied, either proves false and forsakes him, or looks on with an useless Pity, and cannot help him. In the beautiful Image given us by the Prophet, *He is like a Man distressed with Thirst, in the parched Places of the Wilderness, in a Salt Land and not inhabited,*

416 *The Duty and Advantages*

inhabited. He searches every Pit, but finds no Water, or such only as increases his Torment ; and if he cries for Help, there is none can hear him ; deserted and astonished he sinks into utter Dejection, and even Hope itself is swallowed up in Despair. Lo this is the Man that takes not God for his Hope, but trusteth in the Multitude of his Riches, and strengthens himself in his Ungodliness. Thus weakly provided is he even with regard to temporal Happiness, thus foolish and miserable in Comparison with him who trusts in God. But if we carry the Reflection farther, and consider their different Conditions with Respect to another Life, and the Expectations of Futurity, the Worldling here gives up the Argument, and pretends not to dispute the Advantage of Religion. All his Schemes are terminated by the present Scene of Things ; and if there be any Thing beyond it, if an eternal State is to commence after this, he knows and confesses that he has made no Provision for it, that he is lost and undone for ever : A Prospect, which though considered but as possible, is enough to cast a
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Damp over his sprightliest Hours, and embitter every Pleasure. But if he ever attends to the Arguments that persuade his Belief of this great Truth (and sometimes in spite of all his Amusements he will be forced to attend to them) with what Horror and Agonies must he reflect on the dreadful Scene it opens to him !

UPON the whole then it appears from the Comparison, that he who trusts in God has much the Advantage, even with respect to present Felicity ; and when we take Futurity into the Account, he stands alone in his Hope and Pretensions, and is acknowledged to have no Competitor ; and it must be observed, that this glorious Hope is itself the best ingredient, and the surest Foundation even of his present Happiness : from hence he derives Content in his Enjoyments, Easiness in his Expectations, and Support and Courage in Calamity. He considers that his proper Home and Heritage is in another World, and therefore regards the Events of this, with the Indifference of a Guest that tarries but a Day ; in the mean time that Peace of Conscience, that Confidence towards God which

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418 *The Duty and Advantages.*

he enjoys are a perpetual Spring of Pleasure to his Soul. He triumphs over Death itself, disarmed of its Sting, and even longs to appear in the Presence of that God in whom he has trusted, and through those Mercies in *Christ* he hopes to receive a blessed Immortality.

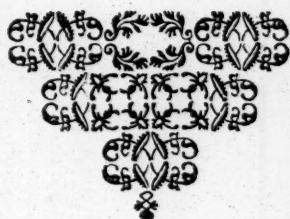
I SHALL conclude with reminding you of one Corollary arising to us from these Reflections.

THAT since a Confidence in God is the only sure Foundation of our Happiness present or future, and the Uprightness of our Heart and the Obedience of our Lives, is the only sure Foundation of that Confidence; the first Care and Concern of Man must be to approve himself to God by Righteousness, Holiness, and Purity; a firm Perseverance in the Duties which he has prescribed must be the Ground-work in our Scheme of Happiness; and if this be truly laid, the Superstructure will be strong and abide the Trial. We shall be able to look up to God, with a firm Trust in his Promises; a Trust, which will support us in all Events of Life; in our greatest Troubles his Comforts will refresh
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of Trust in God. 419

our Souls ; and when we pass through the Vale of the Shadow of Death, the Light of his Countenance will be our Consolation, and open a Prospect to our Faith into those Regions of Bliss and Glory, where our Labours and our Fears shall cease, and Sorrow shall be no more.

The E N D.



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